

DEMOCRACY



EDWARD

McCHESNEY SAIT

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Democracy



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BY
EDWARD McCHESNEY SAIT



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PREFACE

At the very time when its empire has been most widely extended and its principles most loudly extolled by the politicians, democracy faces a perilous situation. The old ardent faith is subsiding into mere conformity. Disillusionment marks a stage of experience in which democratic performance is contrasted with democratic promise and assumptions that once passed without challenge are subjected to cool scrutiny and dispassionate analysis.

During the past decade every important aspect of democracy has been explored. The new literature is at once considerable in volume and significant in character. It is so significant that it must modify or invalidate nineteenth century doctrine; and so considerable in volume, so specialized and scattered, that the casual reader stands in need of guidance. In vain he consults general treatises and textbooks. These still lag behind, incorporating (perhaps) some new material here and there, citing one or two of the iconoclasts or heretics in a foot-note, but in the main repeating the venerable pieties. The search at last reveals, in Professor Hearnshaw's *Democracy at the Crossways*, a fairly systematic review of the controversial literature. Unfortunately Professor Hearnshaw wrote this book during the last years of the World War. He ante-

dates the great era of higher criticism. Considering what they had to endure in the next ten years, one is even surprised to learn that democrats already stood hesitant and irresolute at the crossways. It is a matter of some concern to find out where they are standing now.

I have attempted here only a most superficial inquiry. It takes the form of four lectures which I delivered at Scripps College in 1928. The purpose of those lectures was to indicate the existing clash of opinion over the fundamentals of democracy and to fix attention on the more prominent writers and their varying points of view. Notwithstanding limitations and deficiencies, this little book may be found useful. It makes a rapid survey of the main areas of conflict, cites most of the books that ought to be read, and reflects something of the quality of those books through the medium of quotation. It is intended to serve as a sort of readers' guide. The absence of any similar book is the excuse for its publication.

EDWARD MCCHESENEY SAIT
Pasadena, California, March, 1929.

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Democracy



FUNDAMENTALISM

Confucius, it is said, declared that his first concern as an autocrat would be to define his terms and make them correspond with things. We do to-day constantly use terms which it would puzzle us to define. What is a gentleman? Some years ago, in the columns of the *Westminster Gazette*, I followed a prolonged controversy over this question and learned that a gentleman might be, among many other things, a person who paid the landlord's bill without glancing at the items. What is democracy? We meet with a great variety of definitions. The terminology of politics is loose, notoriously wanting in scientific precision. It illustrates, better than does the map of Europe, the play of that hallowed principle of self-determination. It is a region of chaos; and there the explorer finds the label of democracy attached to the most diverse objects.

Here, for example, is the rhapsody of Mr. Paul Kester:¹ "Democracy, like Christianity, of which it is only another form, is a perfect and complete philosophy of life, even more than it is a theory of government. . . . It is the best of the heart interpreted by the best of the head. It is a state of life in which no human act is unimpor-

tant." This is the language of mysticism. In search for something more realistic we may turn, perhaps, to Professor Irving Babbitt. "Whatever democracy may be theoretically," he tells us,² "one is sometimes tempted to define it practically as standardized and commercialized melodrama. . . . If democracy means simply the attempt to eliminate the qualitative and selective principle in favor of some general will, based in turn on a theory of natural rights, it may prove to be only a form of the vertigo of the abyss." Mr. Kester, then, identifies democracy with all the highest (and vaguest) human aspirations. Mr. Babbitt is criticizing here the uglier aspects of that majority rule which he takes to be the basic principle of democracy.

Now, varied as are the definitions, the great bulk of them can be distinguished as falling into one or the other of two categories. The criterion in the one case is not the form of government at all, but the existence of certain social aims or of certain social conditions. According to Mr. Ralph Adams Cram,³ "true democracy means three things: Abolition of Privilege; Equal Opportunity for All; Utilization of Ability. Unless democracy achieves these things it is not democracy, and no matter how 'progressive' its methods, how apparently democratic its machinery, it may perfectly well be an oligarchy, a kakistocracy or a tyranny. The three imperative desiderata named above may be achieved under a monarchy, they may be lost in a republic, the mechanism does not

matter." Democracy, says Professor Sloane,⁴ is a state of mind; "we feel equality, we want fraternity, and we demand a possible liberty." Equality most often appears as an essential element: "equality of men's material and social conditions," says Dr. Crozier;⁵ equality of opportunities and responsibilities, says Professor Lennes;⁶ moral, legal, and practical equality, says Mr. H. G. Wells.⁷

It was in the spring of 1927, lecturing at the Sorbonne, that Mr. Wells defined democracy as moral, legal, and practical equality. He expressed confidence that most of his auditors would accept the definition. But meanwhile, in the same month, he himself had rejected it. "Democracy is a word with a remarkable variety of meanings," he had written.⁸ "Here I am using it in its commonest current sense to express government by legislators and administrators appointed by popular vote; government based on the assumption that ultimately the 'people' is sovereign. . . . Unless democracy is thus defined its meaning will flap away into the wildest contradictions." Quite true; and, without my pausing to describe them, some of the more obvious contradictions will occur to you at once. Thus, by common consent (excepting always Mr. Cram) the United States is regarded as a democracy. Are we to say that liberty must be taken as its distinguishing mark, irrespective of the form of government, and that the child-labor laws or the prohibition amendment make the state less democratic, even though these restrictions upon liberty were imposed by the people themselves?

Such a conception of democracy does violence to the etymology of the word and to prevailing usage.

Etymologically the word means government by the people. It was so understood by the Greeks;⁹ and, notwithstanding the innumerable vagaries that one encounters, the weight of modern authority still gives it a similar meaning. In the field of politics the writers of assured eminence and reputation agree with Sir Henry Maine that "democracy means simply a particular form of government," that "it is simply and solely a form of government."¹⁰ They agree, further, that it means government by the Many. But who are the Many? Maine, writing more than forty years ago, held that "the border between the Few and the Many, and again between the varieties of the Many, is necessarily indeterminate." Nowadays we are inclined to speak with more precision. We smile over Professor Hearnshaw's naïve statement that democracy "continued to flourish" in the English shire courts of the twelfth century.¹¹ It would seem grotesque to describe the United States as a democracy in 1789, when the voters constituted only 3 per cent of the population; or to describe England as a democracy in 1832, when the Reform Act enfranchised only one adult male in every five. Democracy now implies universal suffrage, a suffrage extended either to substantially all adults without distinction of sex, or at least to substantially all adult males.

Democracy, conceived thus as a government that is

based on manhood suffrage, is a creation of the nineteenth century. The republics of antiquity made some approach to it. Early in the third century B. C. the plebeian tribal assembly at Rome, in which landless men and freedmen could vote, became the supreme law-making body. In the Athenian ecclesia of the fifth century B. C. all male citizens had a seat. Nevertheless, Rousseau was resting on solid facts when he styled the régime of the Periclean age "a tyrannical oligarchy." Of the whole population 50 per cent were slaves, another 15 per cent metics—that is, resident aliens; and these metics, who made the business prosperity of Athens and bore the brunt of taxation, were rigidly excluded from political rights. Indeed, since citizenship could be acquired only by inheritance from a mother and a father who were themselves citizens, political rights were the monopoly of a closed caste. Wherever we look among the ancient republics, we find a society that guarded its privileges jealously against the alien and that was largely sustained by slave labor. If at the same time we find equality prevailing within the restricted citizen class, that kind of democracy was, nevertheless, very different from ours.

Democracy was, as I have said, a creation of the nineteenth century. What, then, of the American Revolution, the French Revolution? Are these not pictured in the pages of Carlyle—and of other less dithyrambic historians—as great democratic upheavels? Here is Carlyle:

"Boston Harbor is black with unexpected Tea: behold a Pennsylvania Congress gather; and ere long, on Bunker Hill, Democracy announcing, in rifle-volleys death-winged, under her Star Banner, to the tune of Yankee-doodle-doo, that she is born, and, whirlwind-like, will envelop the whole world! . . . Democracy is born; storm-girt, is struggling for life and victory. A sympathetic France rejoices over the Rights of Man." But was democracy born? The French Revolution, if it gave currency to the idea of manhood suffrage, fell short of it in practice. If it took the Rights of Man as its creed and made genuflexions at appropriate passages in the ritual, its new faith was not applied literally in the region of mundane affairs. The middle-class deputies diluted the principle of equality when they framed the constitutions of 1791 and 1795. As devout worshipers of an idea, one might say, they gave ostentatious welcome to the clodhopper in their own pews when the democratic mass was celebrated; as calculating politicians they shrank from rude contact with him at the polls. Otherwise, why did they base voting rights upon a tax-paying qualification, with indirect election and a higher qualification at the second stage? Napoleon, it is true, invoked the plebiscite: he decorated the institutions of Consulate and Empire with a halo of universal suffrage; but what he gave was the illusion, not the reality, of popular control. With the restoration of the Bourbons even that illusion vanished. The vote was now restricted to persons of conse-

quence who paid a direct tax of at least 300 francs.

The American Revolution was still less than the French a democratic movement. Discontent had been aroused, not by the domestic institutions which the colonists themselves had built up, but by restrictions which an external authority had imposed. After independence had been achieved, the position of the propertied classes remained almost as secure as it had been before. The right to vote depended upon a property qualification in eleven states and upon a tax-paying qualification in the other two. Thomas Jefferson supported in 1776 and 1783 a property qualification in Virginia; and in later years, while endorsing the principle of manhood suffrage, he did not regard it as an essential element of republican faith. Nor did his followers generally accept it during his lifetime. The Declaration of Independence had no more practical application than the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The age of Jefferson was the age of aristocratic politics in the United States, of government by the rich and the well-born. The voters, themselves a very limited body according to our present democratic notions, accepted as a matter of course the leadership assumed by men of wealth and social prominence. The Livingstons and Clintons and Schuylers governed New York, as the great planters governed Virginia; and John Adams declared that a few rich merchants could carry any election in Massachusetts. John Adams was, of course, no democrat. Democracy is, he said, "the most ignoble, unjust, and

detestable form of government, its only excellence being that it is the quickest to pass away." He was giving voice to convictions that were entertained, in the eighteenth century, by men of substance everywhere. Those convictions persisted well into the nineteenth century. In the New York constitutional convention of 1821 Chancellor Kent vehemently denounced the proposal to abolish the property qualification for the suffrage. "Such a proposition, at the distance of ten years past, would have struck the public mind with astonishment and horror," he exclaimed. ". . . The apprehended danger from the experiment of universal suffrage, applied to the whole legislative department, is no dream of the imagination. It is too mighty an excitement for the moral condition of men to endure. . . . We stand, therefore, on the brink of fate, on the very edge of a precipice. If we let go our present hold on the senate, we commit our proudest hopes and our most precious interests to the waves."

Kent's tragic tones and dark forebodings left the apostles of democracy unshaken. His speech was derided as the "elegant epitaph" of an old aristocratic order that was already sinking into the grave. New York and Massachusetts in that same year substituted a tax-paying for a property qualification. If we look forward a few years to the first election of Andrew Jackson, we may say that democracy has at last arrived. Manhood suffrage then prevailed in fourteen of the twenty-four states; the property qualification, which had been universal in the

eighteenth century, survived in only four. In the original states the process of change had been gradual, personal property appearing as an alternative to landed property in satisfaction of the suffrage requirements, these later giving way to tax payments of one kind or another, and finally tests being abolished altogether. The influence of the new frontier states had accelerated the process. There social conditions among the homesteading pioneers assumed a remarkable uniformity that reflected itself in politics; and the leveling ideals of the West, propagated by economic equality, served to encourage the democratic movement as it made headway in the East.

The United States was, then, the birthplace of modern democracy. This child cannot be regarded in any sense as a biological sport, as an illustration of de Vries's mutation theory. It drew from the germ-plasm of the mother-country—the home of ordered liberty and of parliamentary institutions—certain innate qualities that gathered new strength and expanded rapidly under the stimulus of a congenial environment. In the Old World the democratic impulse had to combat hostile prejudices, entrenched interests, traditional class distinctions. Against such obstacles, often fighting its way with revolutionary violence, now advancing and now retreating, it made slow progress. Triumph came suddenly in France with the collapse of the Second Empire, more than a generation after Andrew Jackson had entered the White House. It came gradually in England, bit by bit, as successive

classes advanced in economic power, in enlightenment, and in political consciousness. First the monopoly of landed wealth gave way before the new wealth of manufacture and commerce in 1832; then, after a period of middle-class ascendancy, the door was opened successively to the urban proletariat in 1867 and to the agricultural workers in 1884. Thus, in a series of stages, spread over half a century, and by complicated statutory provisions, the English Parliament reached an approximation to manhood suffrage without openly acknowledging the principle or the doctrine. I have a purpose in giving the dates, in connecting the rise of democracy with the age of Jackson in the United States, of Gambetta in France, and of Gladstone in England. The dates are recent dates. The phenomena are new phenomena. How can we regard with casual complacency—as if it were part of the natural order of things and divinely appointed from the beginning—a system which appeared only yesterday, which has still to justify itself in practical achievement, and which, for all we can tell, will prove as transitory as the rule of the Many in Athens or in Rome?

But with facts of this sort the mystical democrat, the transcendentalist, has no concern. He has had a religious experience. He has seen God. Democracy—which to cool, appraising, realistic minds is nothing more than a form of government, government by the Many—becomes to him (as Professor Sloane defines it) “a state of mind” or (as Mr. Kester defines it) “a true and beautiful thing,”

"a perfect and complete philosophy of life." He accepts with awed reverence the statement of faith that has come down from the apostolic age, the dogmatic creed that was proclaimed in a time of ridicule and persecution, when rigid formulas could alone withstand the insidious attacks of pagan skepticism and when any concession, however slight, would open a fatal breach in the defenses. The fundamentalist holds fast to the original creed by lifting it above the plane of reason and argument. It is revealed truth. No matter what strange anomalies confront him in its practical application, he must keep this precious inheritance whole and undefiled. If the mountains do not move, he must still believe that a more perfect faith would make them move. The cure for democracy, he always maintains, is more democracy. If you confront him with facts, with the contradiction between the facts and the theory of popular control, he replies that democracy must be judged, not by its yesterday or to-day, but by its to-morrow—its always receding to-morrow;¹² and that, as Chesterton said of the Christian faith, it has not been tried and found wanting, but found hard and never really tried.

The fundamentalist takes a sanguine view of human nature and of average human capacity. He believes that, notwithstanding the evil propensities of particular individuals, men taken in the mass spontaneously generate the truth or at least, by some mysterious power of divination, recognize the truth and then resolutely follow it. Accord-

ing to the first article of the creed the voice of the people is the voice of God. The fundamentalist further believes that, since the business of government requires no special aptitudes and no special training, the average man is capable of discharging any public function. Jacksonian democracy set no limits to the competence of the voter. He possessed, in the idealized portrait, a strength of character, a soundness of judgment, and a devotion to civic duty that could not always be detected in the flesh-and-blood original. The conviction prevailed that the more frequently and directly the voter intervened in government the better the results would be. The Athenians, in their logical and doctrinaire fashion, filled public offices by lot; for, as Aristotle said, "all men claim political ability and think they are quite competent to fill most offices." ¹⁸ Now, since the voice of the people is the voice of God, a peculiar reverence attaches to the ballot, through which the people speak. The ballot has magical properties. A century ago the English fundamentalists embodied their aspirations—annual elections, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and the rest—in the People's Charter and took Feargus O'Connor as their prophet. O'Connor said, deploring the misery of the masses: "Away, then, with the whole system at once: the wound is too deep to be healed by partial remedies; the nation's heart's blood is flowing too rapidly to be stopped by ordinary stypticks. Give us the only remedy for all our social and political maladies; make every man in his artificial state, as he

might be in his natural state, his own doctor, by placing the restorative in his hand, which is Universal Suffrage. . . . Six months after the Charter is passed every man, woman, and child in the country will be well fed, well housed, and well clothed." In a word, Feargus O'Connor glimpsed the millennium, the ultimate goal of the race: poverty and ignorance, like injustice and oppression, would melt away at the magic touch of the ballot.

This mystical faith has bred courage even to the point of martyrdom. The militant suffragettes, as pictured by Dame Ethel Smith,¹⁴ "pushed selflessness, endurance, passionate pity and love, in short, idealism in its most transcendental form, to a pitch that will be the wonder of the human race as long as this globe soars around the sun." The suffragettes had their *Book of Martyrs*. Who does not recall, for example, the tragedy at Epsom Downs, in the running of the Derby, when Emily Wilding Davison broke through the barriers and flung herself in the path of the King's horse as he led the field upon the home stretch? Who does not recall the English hunger-strikes in Holloway Prison and the American hunger-strikes in Occoquan Workhouse? When the abandonment of forcible feeding was proposed, the English Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, said in the House of Commons: "We have to face the fact that they would die. There are those who hold another assumption. They think that after one or two deaths in prison militancy would cease.

In my judgment there was never a greater delusion. I readily admit that this is the issue upon which I stand and upon which I feel I would fight to the end those who would adopt the policy to let the prisoners die. So far from putting an end to militancy, I believe it would be the greatest incentive to militancy which could ever happen. For every woman who dies, there would be scores of women who would come forward for the honor, as they would deem it, of earning the crown of martyrdom. . . . They are hysterical fanatics, but, coupled with their hysterical fanaticism, they have a courage, part of their fanaticism, which undoubtedly stands at nothing; and the honorable member who thinks that they would not come forward, not merely to risk death, but to undergo it, for what they deem the greatest cause on earth, is making, in my judgment, a profound mistake. . . . They would seek death."

The fundamentalist, then, is sustained by the conviction that his god is the only god and that truth has been revealed once for all to the chosen people. He has heard of other creeds, "old faiths infirm and dead"; but, when he glances back and sees the strange political aberrations and monstrous delusions of the past, instead of concluding, as Plato did, that nothing in the world endures, he thinks of democracy as the natural, inevitable, and final culmination of human groping for the truth. According to the Greek view—the view of Plato and Aristotle and Polybius—forms of government perpetually change and

succeed each other in some definite cycle; according to the fundamentalist, democracy is the perfect and permanent flower of a completed evolution. I find this doctrine in the works of Professor MacIver,¹⁵ Professor Cooley,¹⁶ and other fundamentalist theologians. "If we are right in our interpretation of the state as an organ of the community," says Professor MacIver, "we must regard all states in which the general will is not active as imperfect forms. This view seems to be confirmed by a study of the historical process, for it appears to be true that, in spite of reversions, the main trend of the state, after it has finally emerged as a state, is toward democracy. . . . A people can overthrow every form of government but its own—then it finds no alternative. A republic may be destroyed from without, but it is as nearly invincible from within as anything human." Professor Cooley writes in a similar vein. The facts of history and social science, he asserts, sanction a belief in the permanence of democracy; and, from the practical standpoint, we should merely waste our time in discussing the comparative merits of other forms of government.

The mystical democrat or fundamentalist, then, looks upon democracy as the final flower of evolution, as an everlasting flower which, without the help of the watering-can, will keep its bloom through the ages. No matter if he does neglect it utterly: never will a petal fall. To the scientific mind, on the other hand, democracy appears merely as a system which, in a world of

ceaseless change, has shown itself best adapted to a certain set of temporary conditions. Yesterday the rule of One was all but universal; to-day the rule of the Many has supplanted it. There is no reason to suppose that to-morrow will be as to-day. Institutions are set up, modified, abandoned, sometimes by the caprice of man, sometimes by the stern pressure of circumstances. Will democracy still fit our circumstances twenty-five, fifty, or one hundred years from now? There are obscure, underlying forces that act quite independently of human will and shape the structure of human society. These forces may be exerting an influence that will ultimately undermine the foundations of democracy.

In *Democracy and the Human Equation*, published in 1921, Mr. Alleyne Ireland discovered within democratic society the seeds of its own dissolution. He suggested an hypothesis which, six years later, Professor N. J. Lennes took as the theme of his *Whither Democracy?*, at the same time restating it in a more precise, more comprehensive form. What is Mr. Ireland's argument? In our era of political democracy, as a factor in the situation that produced it, we observe a marked social fluidity, an absence of status and rigid class distinctions. The gates of opportunity are opened wide; an able man finds it easy to rise in the social scale, perhaps from the humblest to the highest station. If we speak nowadays of social classes, we do so vaguely, understanding that there is no fixed boundary line between them and no serious ob-

stacle to interclass migration. "The more intelligent and successful elements of the 'lower' classes," Mr. Ireland says,¹⁷ "have been constantly rising out of their class and into the one socially above it. This movement must have the consequence of draining the 'lower' classes of talent and genius, and, through the process of social migration, of increasing the genius and talent of each succeeding upper layer in the social scale." This phenomenon of migration has been noticed often enough—as in the endless plaint of English trade-unionists that the capitalist "picks over" his employees and abstracts the able men, the potential labor leaders; but its significance is just coming to be appreciated. Talents are hereditary; and the class that has once been divested of talents has, within itself, no means of recreating them. Nor can it replenish its exhausted supply by drawing upon the class above by intermarriage; for the inevitable product of social propinquity is assortive mating, the mating of like with like, of intelligence with intelligence, of stupidity with stupidity.

Mr. Ireland insists that there must be, in view of these conditions, "a constant upward and downward genetic pressure tending to produce an increasing difference between the two ends of the social spectrum."¹⁸ This process of class-differentiation, on the basis of varying ability, will become more and more evident. Will it not reach at last a point where, "from the sheer instinct of self-preservation, the Democratic nations will be driven to

give special ability and usefulness a survival value in their political systems?"¹⁹ Professor Lennes develops a similar argument. "As the ideals of democracy are realized in practice," he contends,²⁰ "in that proportion does society tend to become divided into occupational classes with hereditary membership. . . . In a non-democratic society, the son of a common laborer is very likely to become a common laborer because of the occupation of his father. In a thoroughly democratic society, this son will be given every opportunity to reach any occupational station, however exalted, the point which he does actually reach depending very largely upon himself. . . . How can it be that thoroughgoing removal of friction in interclass migration will in the end greatly reduce such migration? After all there is no mystery about it; a simple analogy makes it quite plain: Suppose a farmer were to remove from his herd all but the poorest specimens. . . . There can be no doubt but that agencies are now at work which are tending strongly to remove from each class those who do not naturally belong to it. That is, each occupational class is being made more homogeneous with respect to certain traits at an ever accelerating rate, and these are precisely the traits which will make their possessors remain in the occupational class in which they were born. It seems impossible therefore to escape the conclusion that the process of creating hereditary occupational castes is going on at an ever increasingly rapid rate."

Such a striking hypothesis cannot be lightly dismissed. If further observation of the facts substantiates it, we shall have to abandon the hope of an enduring democratic régime. In supporting his argument Professor Lennes has relied largely upon the data of intelligence tests. Mr. Ireland has used studies of the social distribution of British talent and genius by Dr. Havelock Ellis and Dr. Frederick Adams Woods, who drew their material from the *Dictionary of National Biography*. What do these studies show? From the earliest times till the close of the nineteenth century the sons of craftsmen, artisans, and unskilled laborers yielded 11.7 per cent of the eminent names. As we pass through the period of rapid social democratization, however, the percentage declines sharply. It is 7.2 for those born in the first quarter of the nineteenth century; 4.2 for those born in the second quarter. These figures do seem to indicate a gradual exhaustion of outstanding ability in the lower classes.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc, analyzing a different set of social forces and proceeding along a different route, arrives at a position that is surprisingly close to that of Professor Lennes. I refer to *The Servile State*, which appeared in 1912. That brilliant and ingenious essay seeks to prove that the capitalist régime—unstable in equilibrium, incapable of guaranteeing security and sufficiency to the mass of wage-earners—is moving toward something very different from the socialist or collectivist solution and

toward something quite at variance with the democratic ideal. The future society will be a servile society. "We are," says Mr. Belloc, "rapidly coming nearer to the establishment of compulsory labor among an unfree majority of non-owners for the benefit of a free minority of owners." The very legislation that is designed to improve the lot of the masses—employers' liability laws, insurance against sickness and unemployment, old-age pensions, the minimum wage—carries with it an implication of servitude. The state guarantees to the proletarian, as the master did to his slave, sufficiency and security; and the next step, the fatal corollary of the first—already foreshadowed in the attitude of the state towards its own employees—will lead it to impose the obligation to work.

I pass by these theories with only the briefest mention. We need not be greatly concerned over such remote possibilities. But in the meantime, before any revolutionary social change has manifested itself, can we be sure that men will persist in their great experiment with democracy? Can we safely assume from past human experience that politics is immune from the play of fashion and the attraction of mere novelty? Can we say, with Mussolini and Fascism before our eyes, that there is no alternative to popular government? I am ready to contend that democracy is not invincible and that conditions may arise—may now be arising—which would dispose people to acquiesce in its abandonment. "It is time to face the facts," Bryce said, "and be done with fantasies." The

splendid hopes of the apostles of democracy have given place to doubts and questionings, to a vast disillusionment that carries with it real and immediate danger. I propose to explore some of the causes of skepticism and active discontent and then to inquire whether a drastic revision of the fundamentalist creed or a divorce between that creed and practical conduct is not the sole means of restoring public confidence.

HIGHER CRITICISM

It may be well to recapitulate here the main points of my argument. Democracy, I have insisted, can be defined only in one way—as government by the people, by the adults or at least the adult males of the community. With such a clear-cut definition we know how to identify the phenomenon as soon as it appears. It appeared first in the United States, approximately a hundred years ago, and later, after the lapse of more than a generation, in France. The fundamentalist sees in it the final unfolding of a divine purpose. He not only loses sight of its imperfections in a haze of religious mysticism, but he also believes that, being exempt from ordinary human vicissitudes, it will endure through the ages. Such fatalism depends on faith alone and may some day come into rude collision with the facts. No human institution can stand still; the process of transformation goes steadily forward; and it is possible, as Mr. Alleyne Ireland and others suggest, that we are moving toward a social structure that will be incompatible with democracy. Long before the new social structure has taken form, however, democracy may have disappeared. There are ominous signs and portents.

Consider Mussolini's march on Rome. At the gates of

the city the populace welcomed him as a deliverer. He had delivered them from themselves; he had lifted the burden of sovereignty from their weary shoulders. Men nowadays, he said, are tired of liberty. "Liberty is no longer a chaste, severe maiden for whom generations, in the first half of the last century, fought and died. For the intrepid, restless youths who are now in the dawn of a new history other words exercise a greater fascination—namely, order, hierarchy, and discipline. Fascism is not afraid to declare itself liberal or anti-liberal. It has already passed and, if necessary, will pass again, without the slightest hesitation, over the more or less decomposed body of the goddess of liberty." Mussolini boldly challenged the divine right of universal suffrage. Condemning the old era as one of mere negation, which had broken down controls and restraints and which had exhausted itself in illusions and futilities, he summoned the people to organized, synthetic effort. His new formula—order, hierarchy, discipline—seemed to capture the popular imagination in Italy. The cardboard giant of democracy, as Abbé Dimnet styles it, toppled over. The strangest feature of this strange episode is the favorable reaction of American opinion. Captains of industry, bankers, and professional men return from visits to Italy in a fever of enthusiasm, as if they were dreaming of black shirts and castor oil as a universal panacea.

Are we to dismiss the Fascist revolution as an isolated adventure, as a purely local phenomenon that can have

no meaning and convey no warning to the rest of the Western world? Is the goddess of liberty still secure upon her pedestal? On every hand we encounter evidence of doubt and misgiving. The late Lord Bryce was unrivaled in his acquaintance with political affairs and unsurpassed in sobriety and penetration of judgment. His sympathies were strongly democratic. Yet at the close of his life his optimism faltered. "Few are the free countries," he wrote,²¹ "in which freedom seems safe for a century or two ahead. . . . When the spiritual oxygen which has kept alive the attachment to liberty and self-government in the minds of the people becomes exhausted, will not the flame burn low and perhaps flicker out?" He observed that no one thought of trying to revive popular government when it disappeared in Greece and Rome. "The thing did happen: and whatever has happened may happen again. Peoples that had known and prized political freedom resigned it, did not much regret it, and forgot it." M. Georges Clemenceau, savior of France in the darkest period of the late war and a commanding figure in the public affairs of half a century, has sounded the same pessimistic note in his *Civilisation*. "I draw no conclusions," he says. "But how can one fail to note with what facility certain countries detach themselves from the ideas for which the best blood of Europe has been shed?" Our verbose parliaments, which are "but a disagreeable incident in eternity," will give way to some-

thing else; to something better, M. Clemenceau hopes; but he does not profess to know.

In 1927 Mr. George Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells, taking the public into their confidence, repudiated the fundamentalist creed. Mr. Shaw, in his Kingsway lecture,²² told the Fabian Society that a country governed by its people is as impossible as a theater managed by its audience. Democracy, he said, is not a delusion when it implies the provision of some method by which a dissatisfied people can change its rulers; but it is a delusion, and a very mischievous one, when it implies that the people must govern themselves. Government is a fine art, requiring for its exercise not only certain specific talents and a taste for the business, but a mental comprehensiveness and an energy which only a small percentage of the people possess. The true and natural desire of mankind calls for despotism. Through democracy, says Mr. Shaw, we must produce a dictator, who will put into effect the socialist program and afterward submit the results to the judgment of the people. No matter how the dictator achieves power, he should be thankfully accepted—thankfully accepted, I suppose, on condition that he sees eye to eye with the Fabian Society.

To Mr. Shaw democracy is a negative, antigovernmental force. Mr. Wells likewise sees in the politics, the literature, and the art of the democratic period a great process of the loosening of bonds and general disintegra-

tion.²³ "The onset of Modern Democracy," he says, "did not mean the transfer of power from the few to the many, but a disappearance of power from the world. The vote is an instrument of defence, not a constructive tool. Faced with gigantic constructive needs of ever-increasing urgency, political democracy fails." Democracy is not a permanent form of political and social life, but a phase of immense dissolution. Outside of America, he says,²⁴ extraordinarily few people still believe in it, except as a makeshift to stand in the way of worse things. The average voter does not care a rap for his vote; and, in view of this indifference, we have come now to an arrest, a pause in the democratic advance, marked by a growing distrust of politicians and political methods.²⁵ "Democracy is entering upon a phase of revision in which parliaments and political life as we know it to-day are destined to disappear, . . . a phase so different as practically to open a new age in the story of human experience." The synthetic releases are overtaking and mastering the tendency to fragmentation; and the impending constructive era requires a new form of government.

In Russian Communism and Italian Facism, much as he dislikes some of their manifestations, Mr. Wells sees the hope of the future. "They are both mainly composed of youngish people," he says.²⁶ "The movement dominates the whole life. The individual gives himself—or herself—to the movement in a spirit essentially religious. It

enters into the life and into the conscience as few religions do nowadays. . . . There is a profoundly serious minority in the mass of our generally indifferent species . . . capable of devotion and of living lives of remote and mighty ends, . . . capable of so vivid an interest in public affairs as to make the most complete sacrifices to see things going in the way it considers right. . . . The breakdown of the old loyalties and of the old faiths in the past age has released this great fund of effort and of synthetic possibility for new applications." It is not necessary to convert a majority before the new world begins; the minority will seize power.²⁷ What has happened in Russia and Italy shows that the masses will not resent dictatorship. "No vote famine has broken out in these disfranchised countries. You do not find haggard peasants wandering about in search of a polling booth."²⁸

In his criticism of democracy—that is, apart from the solution he offers—Mr. Wells reflects a fairly dominant opinion, an opinion that is sometimes professed in public and more often entertained privately. The fundamentalist, it is true, may still be encountered. He goes about, as Logan Pearsall Smith describes him, "laden with germs, breathing creeds and convictions upon you whenever he opens his mouth." But citizens have become immune to his sort of germ; they have been inoculated with the disillusionment, the doubt, and even the positive atheism of the higher critics. Higher criticism, which once set the Torquemadas to work oiling the thumb-screws and light-

ing fires for an *auto da fé*, has now become quite fashionable. It enjoys an enormous popularity. In the past ten or fifteen years the critical literature has grown steadily in volume, reaching at last such mighty proportions that its significance can no longer be misunderstood. We are not listening now, as we did when Maine wrote his *Popular Government* or even when Lecky wrote his *Democracy and Liberty*, to the complaints of a dispossessed aristocracy. We hear the authentic voice of a new generation that bends its eager gaze upon the future. The voice is so strong and so persistent that it captures our attention and carries us back irresistibly to the eve of the French Revolution, to the time when a host of philosophers and pamphleteers heralded the decay of the old monarchical system. Philosophy, it is true, has little positive effect on social behavior; men act, more or less blindly, under the impulsion of instinct and circumstance, and then proceed to explain their conduct on rational grounds. But, if the philosopher does not make things happen, his lucubrations may be symptomatic of what actually is happening; and the fact that so many higher critics are busily engaged in attacking the fundamentalist gospel is fair evidence of widespread heresy.

It is, on the whole, a negative heresy, a mere skepticism, that prevails so widely among the people. Here and there, of course, we meet with some earnest soul who has found a new positive faith in communism or anarchism and who dreams of converting the world. But the

general run of men recoil in distaste and apprehension from such an abnormality. They are animated by no aggressive spirit. They entertain, at the moment, no desire to pull down the democratic edifice, because no vivid conception of anything better has taken shape in their consciousness. Frenchmen, under the spell of the philosophers, had no desire to pull down the edifice of monarchy. Faith had gone out; skepticism had come in; and there, said Carlyle, lay properly the cardinal symptom of the whole widespread malady in France. But skeptical minds are empty minds, painfully aware of their emptiness and eager to be filled. If they have rejected one "dusty answer," they remain none the less "hot for certainties in this our life." In France, when a new answer came in the form of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, mark the sudden collapse of the impressive foundations of monarchy—the scene transformed as by an earthquake in the night. Just so the Stuart cause collapsed in 1688. Viscount Cornbury deserts to William of Orange, taking some of the king's troops with him; his father, the Earl of Clarendon, ejaculates in rage and sorrow, "O God! that a son of mine should be a rebel!" and two weeks later makes up his mind to be a rebel himself. It would be easy to misread the portents to-day, as it was in seventeenth century England or eighteenth century France. It would be easy to build a reassuring sense of security on the fact that men continue to practise the democratic religion and conform in the external acts

of worship. But perhaps the worshipers are not filled with reverence as they gaze at the altar lights; perhaps they do not glow with sacrificial ardor and long to lay down their lives for the faith. What are the skeptical thoughts that reduce each affirmation of the creed to a remote, meaningless jumble of words? We turn to the higher critics for enlightenment.

The most obvious of all the disquieting phenomena is the fallen prestige of representative assemblies. Cynicism is not, of course, peculiar to our own time. Carlyle, after taking Emerson to the national talk-shop, the House of Commons, asked him if he did not now believe in a personal devil. Lavelaye observed that Italy was fortunate in the situation of her capital, since the Roman malaria effectually abridged the sessions of parliament. But back in the early, optimistic days, when manhood suffrage faced the future with the immeasurable buoyancy of youth, the legislature held a secure place in the popular regard. It was venerated as the palladium of liberty and the indispensable instrument of progress. In moments of anxiety the people turned with confidence to their representatives. Whittier invested the Thirty-Ninth Congress with the sacred mission of a Bourbon king:

"O people-chosen! are ye not
Likewise the chosen of the Lord
To do his will and speak his word?"

Is this the kind of apostrophe that greets the Seventieth Congress? "The Senate spent the week discussing Al

Smith," Will Rogers remarked.²⁹ "Suppose they will take up Ritchie next week. Did you ever figure it out? They are the only people in the world that are paid to do one job and do every other one there is but that. If business men strayed that far from their actual business, we would have the prosperity of India." Ridicule and contempt are the familiar language of the press and of men prominent in the business world. The country feels safest, according to the *New York Times*,³⁰ when Congress is not in session. The worst thing we have, according to the late E. H. Gary,³¹ is our American Congress. "There has never been a time," says Mr. Robert Luce, whose political writings and service in Congress give his words some authority,³² "when the legislative branch of the government, both national and state, has been held in such low esteem. . . . The trend abroad toward absolutism is highly significant and even more so is the cry for single leadership. . . . It may be that the basic cause for the present disfavor in which representative assemblies are held is their inability to cope with present-day conditions." Even the British House of Commons—doubtless regarded more highly both at home and abroad than any other representative body—suffers from a perpetual bombardment of derisory missiles. It is "past praying for," we are told;³³ it "has fallen into universally recognized decay"; it "has ceased to be an instrument of government. Its ancient functions have been killed under the prolonged and continuous operation of hypocrisy."

The mourners gather round the sick-bed and, squeezing out a pious tear or two, await the end. Mr. Belloc is there, ready with expert medical advice.³⁴ The patient, he avers, has passed beyond the help of stimulants and operations. Get ready the winding-sheet, and see that the heir to this bankrupt estate, whoever he may be, is duly notified.

By way of proving my point I might marshal quotations from a hundred higher critics. There is no need; I find indisputable proof written into our State constitutions. In pre-democratic days these constitutions went no farther than to lay down a few principles and describe the framework of government. They were brief documents, running to ten or twelve pages in Thorpe's collection. What influence was at work, then, through the nineteenth century, to produce monstrosities like the Oklahoma constitution of 1907, which spreads itself over seventy-odd pages? If you glance through those dreary pages, the explanation becomes apparent: the legislature had to be put under restraint. And so, to-day, the "people-chosen," "the chosen of the Lord," find themselves in the calaboose, behind barred windows and barricaded doors. They lock-step around the prison yard under restrictions that would provoke a mutiny in Sing Sing or San Quentin. Through page after page of the regulations we read the formidable list of things that the prisoner is prohibited from doing for fear he might abuse his liberty and indulge his criminal propensities. Our State legislatures, with half a dozen exceptions, are

permitted to meet only once every two years and, even so, are restricted in more than half the States to a session of sixty days or less. It is a settled policy of the chambers of commerce and other business associations, says the *New Republic*,³⁵ "to reduce the sessions of the state legislatures, which are supposed to safeguard American social welfare, to once every four years." May we not expect in the future some still more drastic limitation? The popular attitude suggests it. When the legislature completes its little span of active life and adjourns, a sigh of relief shakes the atmosphere. The newspapers busily set to work estimating the damage that the "people-chosen" have done.

What a travesty of representative institutions! the higher critics exclaim. What an indictment of democracy! The typical product of popular rule is the politician, presumably chosen—to make the laws and guide the destinies of the community—because of his outstanding qualifications; and yet the politician, far from commanding respect, is the perpetual subject of ridicule and sarcasm. Mr. Wells describes him as "an acutely humiliating caricature of the struggling soul of our race."³⁶ He is, says Émile Faguet,³⁷ "a man who, in respect of his personal opinions, is a nullity, in respect of education, a mediocrity; he shares the general sentiments and passions of the crowd; his sole occupation is politics, and if that career were closed to him, he would die of starvation. He is precisely the thing of which democracy has

need. He will never be led away by his education to develop ideas of his own; and having no ideas of his own, he will not allow them to enter into conflict with his prejudices. His prejudices will be, at first, a feeble sort of conviction, afterwards, by reason of his own interest, identical with those of the crowd; and lastly, his poverty and the impossibility of his getting a living outside of politics make it certain that he will never break out of the narrow circle, where his political employers have confined him."

M. Faguet has given us a fairly lifelike portrait. The typical politician is, in fact, a mediocrity. He is just what the democratic process, in its effort to reconcile diverse elements by compromising their prejudices and desires, compels him to be. The fundamentalists are satisfied with him; strong in the conviction of popular wisdom and virtue, they want him to be simply a faithful echo of the voice of God as it thunders out of the polling booth. The higher critics, on the other hand, contend that the only way of getting rid of him and developing some sort of leadership is to scrap the democratic machinery. Between the two extremes, baffled and confused, Professor Hearnshaw wonders why he can't have democracy and leadership at one and the same time. By a most singular illogic he blames the politician—whom the people have carved in their own image—for assuming such a repellent countenance. The parliamentarians, he complains,³⁸ "have taken too narrow and debased a view

of their position and their dignity. They have looked upon themselves too exclusively as the nominees and the dependents of the fluctuating and incalculable aggregation of individual voters whose momentary support has placed them in power. They have trembled too readily before the frowns of whips and wire-pullers. If only they could have realized that the vote of the majority to which they owed their elevation was the resultant of the interplay of all the influences operating in the Great Society; if only they could have believed that they were the supreme agents and executors of the general will, then surely they would have faced their responsibilities and have done their duty with greater courage and fidelity." Be good and great, he tells them; be resolute; be supermen; never mind popularity and votes. He might just as well have advised them to commit hara-kiri on the doorstep of the polling place. Are not popularity and votes the only things that keep them alive? It is a sorry sort of argument which, reversing cause and effect, seeks to show how splendid democracy would be without the politicians who corrupt it. In this country the pious citizen denounces the parties, because they put forward neutral-tinted candidates and vague, ambiguous platforms. He would, if he were honest and if his vision were clear, denounce the democratic process itself. Every form of government, as Professor Hobhouse insists,³⁹ must be held responsible for the type of man it tends to bring to the front. Under the democratic method of mass-

production, candidates and platforms are manufactured in order to be sold; and we may be sure that ingenuity will be exhausted in turning out a commodity that will suit the public taste. What the public gets is not what particular individuals and groups, especially the fastidious few, may be asking for, but what will attract the greatest mass of buyers—win the most popularity and the most votes.

It is absurd to blame the politician because he is not a superman. In order to become a politician, the higher critics tell us, he had first of all to be a mediocrity. "What is the people's one desire, when once it has been stung by the democratic tarantula?" asks M. Faguet.⁴⁰ "It is that all men should be equal, and in consequence that all inequalities, natural as well as artificial, should disappear. It will not have artificial inequalities. . . . Nor does it like natural inequalities, that is to say a man more intelligent, more active, more courageous, more skilful than his neighbors. It cannot destroy these inequalities, for they are natural, but it can neutralize them, strike them with impotence by excluding them from the employments under its control. Democracy is thus led quite naturally, irresistibly one may say, to exclude the competent precisely because they are competent, or if the phrase pleases better and as a popular advocate would put it, not because they are competent but because they are unequal, or, as he would probably go on to say, if he wished to excuse such action, not because they are unequal, but be-

cause, being unequal, they are suspected of being opponents of equality. So it all comes to the same thing."

The masses resent superiority as reflecting on their own condition, and fear it as subversive of the democratic régime. This attitude involves a paradox which Mr. Walter Lippmann has emphasized in his *Preface to Politics*.⁴¹ The religion of humanity has no faith in human beings. Democracy loves a crowd, but, fearing the individuals who compose it, tries to blot out human prestige and minimize the influence of personality. "Democracy has achieved its perfect work," says Mr. Cram,⁴² "and has now reduced all mankind to a dead level of incapacity where great leaders are no longer either wanted or brought into existence, while society itself is unable, of its own power as a whole, to lift itself from the nadir of its own uniformity. . . . For exactly a hundred years democracy has suffered from progressive deterioration until it is now not a blessing, but a menace." Mr. Cram's esthetic feelings are outraged as he watches the mountains being leveled and the valleys filled in. Professor Irving Babbitt has horrid presentiments of the future American society as "a huge mass of standardized mediocrity . . . , one of the most trifling brands of the human species that the world has ever seen."⁴³ Is that the direction in which democracy is taking us? There go the millions, ballot in hand, on their way to the polls: the same ballot for each individual, irrespective of his mental and moral endowments; the same ballot for high and low,

intelligent and stupid, energetic and inert; and since each voter among the millions makes the same infinitesimal contribution, must we not suppose that the élite will be submerged, overborne by weight of numbers?

Theoretical deductions from the principle of majority rule have given an affirmative reply. But still another and a newer school of higher criticism, which is not satisfied with theory, has fairly demolished this view without giving, however, the slightest comfort to fundamentalists. Observation and analysis of the facts have led these critics to a very different conclusion. The few dominate the many. Democracy, as the fundamentalists conceive it, is an imposture, a permanent impossibility in practice; and its god is "the creature of a childlike mythopœic faculty."⁴⁴ The iron law of oligarchy, which Professor Robert Michels formulated some fifteen years ago, was based upon his study of European political parties and especially the socialist parties, the most democratic of them all. He found that, because of general indifference among the rank and file, control and direction always fell into the hands of a little inner circle, sometimes ludicrously small. "Leadership is a necessary phenomenon in every form of social life," Professor Michels maintains.⁴⁵ "Consequently it is not the task of science to inquire whether this phenomenon is good or evil, or predominantly one or the other. But there is great scientific value in the demonstration that every system of leadership is incompatible with the postulates of democracy. We are now aware

that the law of the historic necessity of oligarchy is primarily based on a series of facts of experience. . . . Reduced to concise expression, the fundamental sociological law of political parties . . . may be formulated in the following terms: 'It is organization which gives birth to the dominance of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy.' "

Professor Michels insists, therefore, that there is a formal and fatal contradiction in the democratic process. Government by the Many implies organization; organization destroys spontaneity and brings with it institutionalism; oligarchy ensues. Formerly it was conceded, by men of conservative temper and aristocratic leanings, that, however objectionable it might be, democracy was at least realizable. Now, in the scientific world, we hear a voice denying resolutely and once for all that there is any such possibility.⁴⁶ The business of conducting government requires a talent and energy that the average citizen does not possess. He is ill-informed, apathetic, indolent; and since, as Bryce puts it,⁴⁷ "the propensity to obey is at least as strong as the sense of indifference, and much more generally diffused," leadership passes to men of energy and boldness. "They become the ruling few. This sort of oligarchy is the natural and inevitable form of government." I quote Bryce, but I could equally well quote, in support of this iron law of oligarchy, the late

W. H. Mallock,⁴⁸ Mr. Walter Lippmann,⁴⁹ Professor F. H. Giddings,⁵⁰ Mr. J. A. Hobson, and others of similar standing. Mr. Hobson concedes that "the sort of 'consent' given by the submissive many, confronted by the forceful rule of a self-assertive few, can hardly be held to possess even the rudiments of democracy."⁵¹ Whatever the form of government, says Professor Giddings, "the few always dominate. . . . Invariably the few rule, more or less arbitrarily, more or less drastically, more or less extensively." For "we let George do it, and George to a greater or less extent 'does' us."

George is a very important figure. We must find out, from the *Who's Who* of the higher critics, more about him. There are really two different Georges, closely associated in the vital transactions of government, one being the energetic (though mediocre) politician, who acts as deputy for an apathetic electorate; the other being the businessman, who dominates the politician. Their more or less secret relationship grows out of a curious anomaly in our social arrangements. Political life, as described in constitutions and statutes, is based upon an artificial equality, each man being intrusted with a vote of the same value; economic life, giving unrestricted play to natural forces, develops inequality. Between the two, in view of this fundamental contradiction, there is chronic rivalry and friction. Open hostilities are averted by negotiation, negotiation between the oligarchy of Georges which has got control of the political machinery and the

oligarchy of Georges—these being vastly superior in intelligence and material resources—which has won its way to the front in the economic field. The politicians are in a somewhat equivocal position. Whether or not they have been definitely instructed by their clients, the public, they understand in a general way what is expected of them; and yet, being better informed, they may see the danger of a proposed line of action. They know how delicate the mechanism of business is, how easily dislocated by ignorant tinkering; they know too how dependent everything else is—the very life of the community—upon its smooth, continuous operation. In yielding ground to the business hierarchy they may think of themselves as protecting a misguided public against itself. But the situation has another aspect, which they cannot very well ignore. Their own political future depends less upon loyalty to the public than upon complaisance toward the business interests; for, while the public has a short memory and fickle temper, the business interests largely control the instruments that manufacture so-called public opinion.

Economics precedes politics, and controls it, shapes it, directs it. This thesis is constantly propounded in the literature of the labor movement. The rude shocks of experience have shattered the delusion of Feargus O'Connor that the masses can win economic freedom with the ballot. To-day, as the British Labor party moves closer to the threshold of power, trade-unionists realize that it cannot refashion the economic world, which moves along

an orbit of its own and responds to the working of a higher law; or even arrest the tendencies that are not only eliminating the small shopkeeper and small manufacturer, but also, in the sweep of mass-production and the concentration of capital, depressing the proletariat to a relatively lower level. They realize that life cannot be changed by expressing an aspiration on paper and calling it a statute. They believe in direct action. They preach a new industrial crusade, the counterpart of last century's political crusade. They wish to establish the principle of democracy in factory and workshop by the massed action of the wage-earners. "The road to freedom," says Mr. William Mellor,⁵² "lies not through the polling booth, but through the work-shop gates. . . . Just so far as the voters rely on the vote as the primary weapon, they will fail to win freedom; just in so far as they recognize that the value of the vote is in proportion to their industrial and economic strength they will succeed." Expressing the same idea, Mr. A. V. Calverton maintains that "the very basis of opportunity in the modern world is economic. Political democracy, therefore, without economic democracy is an impotent gesture."⁵³ And so, disillusioned, men turn to an unreal world and cling to some myth of socialism or syndicalism or communism. They seek release in the contemplation of a future life that must always remain an unsubstantial dream. Into such a heaven this "huge mass of standardized mediocrity" can never be admitted.

According to the higher critics, then, or to some of them at least, politics ultimately responds to economic pressure. Mr. Norman Angell pictures the American captain of industry as saying: "Political folly does not much matter. We must give the people their circuses, the illusion of rule; let them have this ritual of the vote; but it does not have any effect really. It is the organization of business and industry which has made this nation the most economically and socially comfortable and secure in the world. The politicians have had no part in it except occasionally and temporarily to hamper the work."⁵⁴ There may be periods when economic control relaxes, when it gives way before a sudden outbreak of discontent. But popular emotion subsides; the vigorous impulse spends itself; and the dominant few, who are persistent and tireless, rebuild their fallen ascendancy. Is this a sham democracy, a democracy of baffled and frustrated striving? It may, nevertheless, be a desirable system—desirable in the sense of the Greek apothegm, that the good is sometimes better than the best. It is a system of compromise, a system of restraints, of checks and balances; and in its practical effects far superior to the alternative of an undisguised oligarchy of business men. In pursuing its ends, under this system, business has to be moderate, circumspect. I find this idea well expressed by Mr. Hobson. He says:⁵⁵ "Lip-service to public opinion, by those conscious of the power to manufacture it, and to electoral machinery, by those conscious of the power to manipulate it,

is an instructive barometer of popular self-government. It signifies a recognition by the real rulers that the exercise of the power of the State must be consistent with the maintenance of a measure of popular contentment, and a reliable material basis for the same, and that cunning must be substituted for crude force in working the instruments of popular consent. Hence the growing importance of the control of the press, the school, the church, the cinema, and other machinery for producing 'the consent of the governed' to the exercise of power by the ruling class."

But this system, if good, is likewise unstable. It maintains an uneasy and uncertain equilibrium, the higher critics warn us. Suppose that the masses, coming to understand and resent their subordination, should embrace Mr. Cole's doctrine of Guild Socialism⁵⁶ or some similar gospel of emancipation.⁵⁷ Suppose that they should find resolute leaders and resort to open rebellion. Such a situation—barring efficient leadership—developed in 1920 when the Italian proletariat seized the factories and the peasants seized the land. The result was not a communist utopia, but Mussolini. The dominant few, knowing that catastrophe would follow the intrusion of democracy and its politicians into the industrial field, will always resist it. They will employ, as circumstances dictate, argument or bribery or force; and in extremities, finding pacification difficult or impossible under democratic forms, they will introduce some system that suits them better. Mr.

Hugh Taylor has shown, in his *Origin of Government*, that the man on horseback, the dictator or tyrant, has appeared throughout history as a "beneficent antidote" to social chaos; in fact, as a "biological necessity." How is it that he establishes himself so easily, with a mere whiff of grape-shot or perhaps nothing more deadly than a speech? He has behind him, of course, the substantial vested interests; their very life is at stake. But he draws support also from the great mass of the people, who, growing weary of strife and disorder, separate themselves from the minority of active malcontents and wait anxiously for the sound of an authoritative voice. "The people themselves," says Mr. Frank Exline,⁵⁸ "desire neither Democracy nor Popular Sovereignty; they desire efficient, wise and just government."

Mr. Exline sums up the extreme position toward which the higher critics tend. He does it in a sentence. "Democracy, in so far as it exists in fact, is Anarchy," he says; "in so far as it exists only in name but not in fact, it is a mere illusion; as a form of government, it is impossible."

CRUMBLING FOUNDATIONS

The higher critics tell us what our casual observation seems to confirm: faith has gone out; skepticism has come in. The democratic mirage has dissolved; and men awakened to the tragic reality, that instead of traveling toward the promised land, they have been floundering in a morass of self-deception. They resemble Alice, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, who ran faster and faster in the hand-clasp of the Red Queen only to find that she had never moved at all. "My," Alice exclaims, "I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything is just as it was!" At any rate, if the crowd actually has arrived somewhere, it does not much like the look of the place. Having escaped from the spell of fundamentalism, it turns a candid gaze upon the politician, more or less the perfect image of itself, and shudders with repulsion. It regards the legislature with the same distaste. What it craves most of all—perhaps subconsciously or in a half-comprehending fashion—is the satisfaction of its submissive instinct, its desire for guidance and leadership.

But what about the iron law of oligarchy? If Professor Michels is right, if small coteries of politicians, by

virtue of superior energy or willingness to perform the drudgery of public affairs, insinuate themselves into a position of irresponsible power, do they not supply leadership? It is the negation of leadership. The politicians diffuse about themselves an atmosphere of subservience that drugs the crowd into a sense of complacency. They flatter the crowd as Disraeli flattered Queen Victoria. "Every one likes flattery," said that astute politician; "and when you come to royalty you should lay it on with a trowel." In this way, trading upon the gullibility of the crowd, the political oligarchy diverts attention from its more or less secret proceedings. Its essential task is to adjust the conflicts that are perpetually arising between political and economic interests. We live in two different worlds, as I have already indicated: a political world of equality, in which the mediocre man, because of his overwhelming numbers, sets the tone; and an economic world of survival by natural selection, in which the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. The first reflects a vague, emotional ideal—the aspiration of humanity to rise above its material serfdom. The second reflects a somber reality. Samuel Butler, in *Erewhon*, depicts man as a mere aphid crawling over the machines that he has contrived for his own liberation. Man has been enslaved by his machines. To-day the intricate relationship of all the factors in production and exchange, the delicacy of their adjustments, acts as a fatal bar to popular control and management. And so, at the immediate point of

contact, where the political oligarchy and the economic oligarchy confront each other, the saving compromises are made. Economics, while making a gesture of concession, repels the intrusion of politics and, by bamboozling the "huge mass of standardized mediocrity," saves it from incalculable disaster. The modern fundamentalist, like M. About's Frenchman, gazes into his mirror each morning and sees one twenty-seven-millionth of a sovereign when he should see only the whole of a slave.

This democracy, as the higher critics delineate it, may be called government by consent. No doubt the proposition would hold good that in the past all governments, even those despotic in form, have rested on the consent of the governed, even though that consent may have been merely passive and based on superstition or the habit of obedience. "Governments," says Bryce,⁵⁹ "have always rested, and, special cases apart, must rest, if not on the affection, then on the silent acquiescence of the numerical majority. It is only by rare exception that a monarchy or an oligarchy has maintained authority against the will of the people." But, if this democracy of ours is government by consent, it is far from being what the fundamentalists postulate—a government which the people make and which acts according to their inspired direction. It is far from being a government in which public opinion is the dynamic, propelling force.

Public opinion must be defined before it can be an-

alyzed; and to this term, as to the term *democracy*, a wide variation of meaning has been assigned. Controversy ranges around the meaning, not of the word *public*, but of the word *opinion*. As to the former, we may take it for granted that public opinion is the opinion of the community; not necessarily of all its citizens—such unanimity seldom or never occurs—but of the major part of them. According to a fundamental convention and settled practice of democracy, the major part is taken as the equivalent of the whole. The success of this somewhat mechanical method of deciding controversies depends, however, upon a further consideration. The minority must recognize the validity of the decision, and do so, not because they fear the consequences of denying it, but because they accept the principle that the view of the majority ought to prevail. Without the spontaneous and ungrudging acceptance of that principle, the democratic régime would soon fall to pieces. How could government be carried on if at every turn some minority expressed their disapproval by refusing obedience to the law? How could the minority be expected to acquiesce if the majority began to tamper with their cherished rights and institutions? The indispensable conditions of majority rule—f forbearance, moderation, generosity on the part of the victors; and on the part of the vanquished willing submission to the consequence of electoral defeat—have sometimes been wanting in our twentieth century democracies. Passive resistance has become a familiar weapon. As the

symptom of some deep-seated malady it may well give concern to fundamentalist practitioners. But nowadays we hear a great deal about physical resistance also. The menace of the future lies in the doctrine of minority rights that was formulated by Georges Sorel in his syndicalist philosophy, that was exemplified by the operations of Lenin and Mussolini, and that finds in H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw its most recent advocates. It is really a new version of

"The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power
And they should keep who can."

Any vigorous minority, conscious of its superior enlightenment and inspired by faith in itself, has the right, if not the obligation, to accomplish its mission by force. It will find justification in the historical fact, as presented in Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence*, that progress has always been imposed on the Many by the determined, energetic Few.

I turn now to the word *opinion*. It is often vaguely employed to cover snap judgments and offhand impressions or attitudes of mind that have no firmer basis than desire or prejudice. Mr. Edward L. Bernays tells us that in most cases opinion is a dogmatic judgment accepted on authority.⁶⁰ Indeed, vulgar usage permits so much latitude that the word is deprived of any precise connotation. I prefer to follow President Lowell when he says that "an opinion worthy of the name cannot be formed

without both a process of reasoning and, what is far more difficult, the command of a number of facts." ⁶¹ For the purpose of my argument, or rather the argument of the higher critics, it is essential to have some determinate ground to stand on. I am assuming, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, that opinion must proceed from an analysis of the facts and involve a rational choice between alternative views. What are the consequences of this assumption? We are forced to go behind the popular verdict in each particular case and determine how it has been reached. While the electorate can always decide a question, the popular will that it declares may be quite a different thing from public opinion. The higher critics maintain that it almost always is a different thing; for the average man is averse from sustained thought or incapable of it, unacquainted with the facts or without the means of appraising them.

Public opinion, thus strictly defined, might be approximated in some small community, mainly rural, that was not much embarrassed by its external relationships. Today Switzerland comes nearest to satisfying these conditions. A century ago the American environment was almost ideal. But when democracy spreads itself over half a continent and embraces 120,000,000 people; when economic life, getting further and further away from the simplicity of the Jacksonian frontier, assumes an intricacy that fuddles the brain of the expert himself; when one nation can hardly go about its business in the crowd

without stepping on another nation's toes and getting its ribs stove in by way of reprisal—is this a soil in which public opinion can germinate? There is the effect of distance, the effect of size, the effect of a highly specialized economic mechanism. Democracy dies five miles from the parish pump, Mr. Wells has said. How can the citizen of Stovepipe Wells, California, picture the environment of New York City and translate its problems into terms of his own experience? How can the citizen of either New York or Stovepipe Wells reach any conclusion of his own regarding the highly complicated national problems that he is supposed to take a hand in solving: Boulder Dam, Farm Relief, Muscle Shoals? How can he pretend to find his way through the labyrinth of such international problems as reparations, Allied debts, naval armaments? Such problems are so remote that he cannot see them; they are so complicated and so strange to familiar experience that he cannot understand them. “These public affairs,” says Mr. Walter Lippmann,⁶² “are in no convincing way his affairs. They are for the most part invisible. They are managed, if they are managed at all, at distant centers, from behind the scenes, by unnamed powers. As a private person he does not know for certain what is going on, or who is doing it, or where he is being carried. No newspaper reports his environment so that he can grasp it; no school has taught him how to imagine it; his ideals, often, do not fit with it; listening to speeches, uttering opinions and voting do not, he finds,

enable him to govern it. He lives in a world which he cannot see, does not understand and is unable to direct."

Mr. Lippmann, of course, is expounding the rankest heresy. He is, by implication, condemning the central dogma of fundamentalism—denying the possibility that the voice of the people can be the voice of God. Heresy breeds heresy; Mr. Lippmann's subversive doctrine suggests another still more subversive; and Mr. Norman Angell at last lets fall some blasphemy about the voice of the people being the voice of Satan. How does the fundamentalist defend his faith from these attacks? He may argue that the politicians, by way of enhancing their own prestige, are inclined to make intricacy seem more intricate than it really is and to treat a plain question as if it involved some esoteric mystery. But this is not his capital argument. He prefers to follow a different line of reasoning. He notes how, in the art of warfare, each improvement in defensive armor has been offset by a corresponding improvement in offensive weapons; how the "impregnable" Belgian fortresses crumbled under German artillery fire; and how the finest superdreadnought succumbs to the impact of a sixteen-inch shell. And so, in politics, if public affairs have grown terribly complicated, terribly hard to penetrate, the capacity of the masses to control them has, like the efficiency of the naval gun, increased at a higher ratio. The masses are educated, enlightened. How could it be otherwise when we spend \$2,000,000,000 yearly on our public schools in the

United States and at the same time diffuse the highest forms of culture through the moving pictures, the radio, and the Sunday supplement?

But what sort of enlightenment is this? the higher critics inquire. This prodigy of yours, this average citizen, has obtained the rudiments of knowledge, it is true. He has been "educated" in the usual manner—by the transfer of material from the teacher's note-book to his own note-book without its penetrating the brain of either. He may even have plodded through some elementary text-book on politics, which gives him a rather pale and distorted picture of reality; he may have mastered a few superficial facts and learned how to use a few impressive technical terms with some show of understanding them. With this favorable equipment, if he spends half an hour each week in the columns of *Time* or the *Literary Digest*, he can discuss the most recondite questions in a tone of authority and talk around a subject of which he knows almost nothing without giving the impression that he knows nothing at all. His smattering of education has made him arrogant and bold in situations where he ought to be modest and cautious in expressing a judgment. Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith has travestied his strutting vanity in *Trivia*:

"'Self-determination,' one of them insisted.

'Arbitration,' cried another.

'Co-operation,' suggested a third.

'Confiscation,' answered an uncompromising female.

I too became intoxicated with the sound of these vocables.

And were they not the cure for all our ills?

'Inoculation!' I chimed in. 'Transubstantiation, alliteration, inundation, flagellation, and afforestation!'"

It is doubtful, indeed, that bigger doses of education would do this average citizen any good. Education can train, but not create, intelligence; and the higher critics, observing that the intelligence-testers fix the average mental age of the electorate at fourteen, have a good deal to say about the incurable stupidity of the masses. Mr. H. G. Wells expresses, in somewhat different language, the view of Carlyle, that by common calculation nine out of ten men are recognizable as fools. Mr. Will Durant draws our attention to the fact that "the supply of fools on this planet is replenished at the rate of two hundred every minute."⁶³ Mr. Wyndham Lewis, master of devastating satire and picturesque phrase, has given free play to his convictions on this subject. I quote from *The Art of Being Ruled*:⁶⁴ "Take the poorest and most abject *crétin* in the community (eighty per cent of which resemble him very nearly). Say to yourself, There is nothing too simple and inhumanly stupid . . . for this low-grade fool. It would take you five hundred centuries to teach him to frame the simplest abstract notion. He is permanently and for ever an infant; the Infants' Class always absorbs eighty per cent of the personnel of our famous terrestrial training school, or technical institute, which we call 'mankind.' . . . This re-partition of the

fairy's gifts, leaving this vast human surplus practically *crétinesque*, you must accept. It is not your doing, you did not make the world. You can do nothing to modify it; and even if you could, are you sure that you would not be going against Providence? There is a possibility that a wisdom superior to yours arranged things in this way. Abandon, therefore, all those queer attempts to 'educate' this dense throng of *inapertiva* mankind; or rather, canalize your educative efforts in such a way that only the simplest instruction is provided, nothing that will tax those truly infantile intelligences. (For they are as truly infantile as what more technically is an infant, and the same rule not to overtax and overstrain this undeveloped brain applies to them as to the child.) So, A, B, C, D: *Two and two make four—Donkey tap the door. Three and three make six—Lamps, not tramps, have wicks* (compare the American army tests of Yerkes and others): whatever you consider it possible or desirable to impart to them, let it be done on that system. . . . Although we have called this prodigious mass of people 'infantile,' they are of course outwardly grown up. They do not call themselves infantile as a community. They claim to be treated as responsible, accomplished, intelligent beings. They want to have official bulletins every morning of all accidents, fires, murders, rapes that have occurred throughout the night and part of the preceding day. They wish a detailed account of how their agents and ministers of state have 'fulfilled their trust,' as they

call it, in the conduct of that great and sacred affair, the commonwealth. And they wish to be informed punctually of the results of all racing, ball games, paper-chases, bull-fights, and other similar events."

Does the Infant Class always absorb 80 per cent of mankind? Are 90 per cent, by common calculation, recognizable as fools? Perhaps Mr. Wyndham Lewis, being an artist, sees "the light that never was on sea or land" and produces a striking effect at the expense of fidelity to nature. He did not count the members of the Infant Class. Who can say, in measuring the political capacity of the people, exactly how many are stupid and how stupid they are, or what proportion of all stupidity is to be found at the bottom of the social scale? With inter-class migration, we are told, intelligence steadily rises in the social scale and stupidity steadily falls. But experience compels us to admit that deplorable cretins may still be encountered near the top and Admirable Crichtons near the bottom. When the saving remnant has at last established itself at the top, with the help of Mr. Ireland and Professor Lennes, will it tolerate interference from below? If 80 per cent of the electorate are incapable of forming an opinion, even with the facts clearly before them, democracy is already the "mere illusion" that Mr. Exline calls it; and an illusion should be easy to puncture.

The prevalence of stupidity may be a matter of dispute. But apathy is a phenomenon that is attested not only by election statistics, but by the bewildered complaints of

the fundamentalists themselves. The statistics may well depress the most convinced and resolute democrat. I need not recapitulate them here. It is enough to say, by way of generalization, that in the United States half of the potential voters ignore the election and that three quarters ignore the primary. The diagnostician, as he observes the pallid countenance of democracy, the wasting-away of a once robust physique, recognizes the symptoms of a fatal malady: there is no hope for the patient; this is persistent anemia. What has become of the devotion and enthusiasm that marked the democratic crusade in the nineteenth century or the woman suffrage movement of our own time? Must we believe that the crusading spirit, genuine enough among the leaders, flickered only for the moment in the hearts of the *crétinesque* 80 per cent? It is gone now. As long as the ballot was held tight in the hands of the privileged Few, the covetous Many desired it as a symbol of power and freedom, a mark of distinction in an unequal society. But why should they set much store by a possession which now, freely bestowed upon men of the lowest estate and even upon women, has lost the fictitious value of scarcity?

The ordinary citizen takes little interest in politics as a serious pursuit. When, on rare occasions, he rouses himself from apathy, he does so rather because the campaign has all the dramatic possibilities of a football game than because the issues touch him closely. His time is absorbed by other interests. He is preoccupied first of all with the

task of making a living, and then with his home and family. If he is a religious man, the church attracts him more than the polling booth. And can we be surprised that, after the exhausting labors of the day, he wants to keep his few hours of leisure for recreation and amusement? Civic duty does not attract his jaded mind. He will not listen to the pious doctrine that, in addition to being wise about his own personal affairs, he must now be wise about everybody else's as well, and judge the affairs of the world.⁶⁵

Where are we to place the blame for this abdication? On the citizen who evades his civic duty? on the voter who does not vote? Yes, says the fundamentalist: this stay-at-home citizen, with his abnormal and selfish disposition, is a slacker who denies his democratic god and betrays his country. But is it just to blame the stupid man for his innate stupidity? Is it just to blame him because his poor brain cannot grasp the complex issues? On the other hand, if we assume that the ordinary citizen has intelligence, may there not be some external reason, in the nature of politics itself, for his simply "shrinking from the duty to understand everything into a state of indifference and golf on election day?"⁶⁶ In his *Preface to Politics*, Mr. Lippmann propounded a question that strikes at the very roots of this popular indifference. "If men find statescraft uninteresting," he asked, "may it not be that statescraft is uninteresting? . . . The more I saw of politics at first-hand the more I respected the indif-

ference of the public. There was something monotonously trivial and irrelevant about our reformist enthusiasm, and an appalling justice in that half-conscious criticism which refuses to place politics among the genuine, creative activities of men. Science was valid, art was valid, the poorest grubber in a laboratory was engaged in a real labor, anyone who had found expression in some beautiful object was truly centered. But politics was a personal drama without meaning or a vague abstraction without substance."

The ordinary citizen finds the problems of politics too complicated and too remote from experience. He prefers to stand aside, says Mr. Simeon Strunsky,⁶⁷ and let "the conscientious and unhappy minority sweat blood over the 'facts' about the League of Nations and the 'facts' about the Chicago Drainage Canal," and then end by not understanding. Or, if he does himself sweat blood over the facts and reach a solution, how can he—with his one vote out of millions—hope to make his new-found truth prevail? He soon loses faith in the professions of the politician and the efficacy of the ballot. "When the private man has lived through the romantic age in politics"—I am quoting Mr. Lippmann in *The Phantom Public*—⁶⁸ "and is no longer moved by the stale echoes of its hot cries, when he is sober and unimpressed, his own part in public affairs appears to him a pretentious thing, a second-rate, an inconsequential. You cannot move him then with a good straight talk about service

and civic duty, nor by waving a flag in his face, nor by sending a boy scout after him to make him vote. He is a man back home from a crusade to make the world something or other it did not become; he has been tantalized too often by the foam of events, has seen the gas go out of it," and has been filled with sour derision for the stuff.

The higher critics have now fairly launched their drive against the key-position of fundamentalism. They are trying to show that this public opinion, which is supposed to direct government, does not exist and cannot exist. The average citizen, they maintain, is incapable of forming an opinion, either because, being stupid, he has no reasoning faculties or because, being apathetic, he refuses to exert himself in public affairs. But if he were neither stupid nor apathetic, he would still be handicapped by the difficulty of getting at the facts. He must have command of some of the facts before attempting to frame an opinion about the McNary-Haugen bill or the candidacy of Governor Alfred E. Smith. Although he has other sources of information—books, magazines, public lectures, club meetings, conversation with his friends—he must get most of his data from the newspapers. The newspapers play an indispensable part in modern politics. Without them democracy could not endure in large countries like the United States and Canada; while local events would become a matter of common knowledge through personal intercourse, each community would be

strangely isolated from the life of the exterior world, receiving from correspondence, telephone, and radio the most meager dribblets of news. "In a modern community," says Mr. J. A. Spender, one of the foremost of English journalists,⁶⁹ "the newspaper is an essential part of government by the people. Without newspapers Parliament would be a secret debating society, the public man would be cut off from the public, and the public deprived of the essential material for a judgment on public affairs. The Press might get on without politics, but politics cannot get on without the Press. The relations between the two are nevertheless one of the most difficult problems of modern democracy." Why is the Press, according to Mr. Spender, such a problem for democracy? Why does Mr. Norman Angell say that the press is "one of the worst obstacles to the development of a capacity for self-government, perhaps the worst of all menaces to modern democracy?"⁷⁰ And why does Mr. Lippmann say that men "are wondering whether government by consent can survive when the manufacture of consent [by the press] is an unregulated private enterprise?"⁷¹

M. Rostovtzeff, in his history of the Roman empire,⁷² suggests that a civilization is bound to be debased in standards and diluted in quality when it begins to penetrate the masses. Modern journalism has suffered in just that fashion. It has been democratized, brought down to the *crétinesque* level, and colored in accordance with popular taste. Lord Salisbury remarked that Alfred Harms-

worth, having invented one paper (the sensational *Daily Mail*) for people who could not think, had now invented another (the all-picture *Daily Mirror*) for people who could not read. That epigram summed up the tendencies of contemporary journalism. We can only repeat and amplify it. "It is said of the inhabitants of a certain Greek island," observes Professor Babbitt,⁷³ "that, though they were not fools, they did just the things that fools would do. It is hard to take a glance at one of our news-stands without reflecting that, though we may not be fools, we are reading just the things that fools would read. Our daily press in particular is given over to the most childish sensationalism. . . . The American reading his Sunday paper in a state of lazy collapse is the most perfect symbol of the triumph of quantity over quality that the world has yet seen. Whole forests are being ground to pulp daily to minister to our triviality."

What are the conditions that have exposed journalism to the gibes of Lord Salisbury and Professor Babbitt? Journalism has ceased to be a literary profession. It has become a branch of commerce. The metropolitan newspaper, requiring an elaborate plant and a costly news service, has behind it a capital of millions. The *Chicago News* was recently sold for \$14,000,000. If the enterprise is not successful, the losses may run to huge figures, perhaps to \$500,000 annually; and the one condition of success is circulation. The capitalist-owner, who has superseded the editor-owner, concentrates his energies upon

increasing the circulation, because circulation brings advertisers, and advertisers make the paper pay. The insatiable appetite for circulation overpowers conscience and drives ideals into hiding. The capitalist-owner, like any other business man who is engaged in large-scale manufacture, must be chiefly concerned in giving the people what they want. He seeks to please the great public in its changing moods, says Mr. J. A. Spender,⁷⁴ and frankly produces a variety entertainment in which politics is but one turn among many. Above all, he plays upon the instincts of the herd. A great business that has been built up at enormous cost and effort will not be lightly risked on unpopular or eccentric causes. "With the growth of the commercial side the temptation to make opinion conform to the supposed prejudices of readers and advertisers becomes all but irresistible, and the supposed maker of opinion is thus converted into a more or less skilful guesser of what the readers and advertisers desire to be told. . . . Seldom can the new journalism afford to oppose popular prejudice or challenge a conventional opinion."

To meet the public taste and direct it into particular channels—sometimes to avoid giving offense to advertisers—news is distorted, suppressed, manufactured. In describing events, the reporter may shift the emphasis in such a way as to alter the whole perspective or else marshal the facts that support a particular interpretation and suppress all the rest. He is not, as a rule, deliberately

dishonest. Facts are complex things. "They have innumerable facets which may be seen from a dozen different angles; perfectly honest statements of the same events may lead to entirely different conclusions."⁷⁵ The reporter, not being concerned about the fate of democracy, uses the facts as a sensational novelist would use them, selecting and coloring them, and evolving a story that will appeal to the vulgar imagination.

No problem of democracy has attracted more attention than this problem of the press. Within the past decade many writers have undertaken to expose the degeneracy of modern journalism and its disastrous consequences from the standpoint of popular government. For the purposes of illustration I take Mr. Norman Angell, who developed his views two years ago in *The Public Mind* and six years ago in *The Press and the Organisation of Society*. What is the burden of his complaint? The press, he says,⁷⁶ intensifies the human weaknesses that lie at the root of most public folly; it exploits and develops immensely dangerous forces. Since profits are the very condition of its existence, it panders to the instincts and emotions that can be most easily excited.⁷⁷ "This competitive process sets up a progressive debasement of the public mind and judgment; of that capacity to decide wisely and truly which is, in the last resort, the thing upon which the well-working of society must depend. . . . The constant stimulus to passion and the herd instinct, entailed by the necessity of finding an appeal

that shall be wider and more successful than that of a rival newspaper concern, the consequent violence of the public mind, the impossibility of an unpopular view obtaining adequate expression, all end by destroying the capacity to weigh contrary opinion, by which alone thought on public affairs is possible." Can it be that our forefathers looked upon the press as the great hope of democracy, as a positive elevating influence and as an indispensable basis for the development of opinion? The press has been democratized since their time. It now reflects and even exaggerates the very shortcomings that bring the popular capacity for affairs under suspicion.

Consider now the average citizen, no longer stupid, no longer apathetic, but become for once the paragon of the fundamentalist imagination. He sets loose his vast intellectual resources upon the McNary-Haugen bill. It is being debated in both houses of Congress. He finds, however, that the proceedings of Congress, as his newspaper reports them, take the form of an altercation between two senators, a fist-fight on the floor of the house, a few sentences in which a great statesman exposes the viciousness of any kind of farm relief, and a vote in which the senate records its approval of the bill. What the provisions of the bill may be he has no means of finding out. Perhaps he is a little relieved on that account, because such details are hard to remember (for the purpose of impressing his fellow-citizens) and still harder to understand. There are, of course, no end of

facts waiting for him: news items of various kinds, "interpretative" despatches that read like editorials—the general purport of these being that the Middle West is turning cold toward farm relief and that the rest of the country waits anxiously for the president's veto. The average citizen has by this time matured an opinion. Still more easily he matures an opinion about the strike in the bituminous coal fields or about the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti. Being in possession of the facts and having analyzed them with his customary acuteness and reasoned upon them, he is scandalized by what he reads in the *Nation* or *New Republic*. He writes an indignant letter and cancels his subscription.

His New York newspaper, reflecting a certain local point of view in business and politics, gives its readers what they want. It hands back to them their own thoughts or what would be their own thoughts if they were thinking at all. At the same time it plays upon their weaknesses, their prejudices, and prepossessions, not only intensifying them, but also directing them into new channels. The capitalist-owner, through his business connections, favors particular policies—merchant-marine subsidies, it may be, or intervention in Mexico, or tax-reduction; by subtly coloring the news and brigading editorial opinion with it, he implants these favorite ideas securely in the minds of his multitude of readers. Such propaganda, such systematic and habitual distortion of the news, will not be resented as long as it harmonizes

with the readers' deep-seated convictions or their general attitude toward public affairs (if they have any). It is, indeed, more than likely to prevail.

The newspaper is only one among many instruments of propaganda. Since the days of the Anti-Corn-Law League in England the possibilities of organized minority agitation have been well understood. In the United States this self-conscious art of manufacturing consent has been carried to a remarkable state of efficiency. The number of propaganda groups is beyond computation, some of them formidable in membership, others consisting of little more than an office, a letter-head, and a paid secretary. The significance and effects of their activities has not been lost upon our own publicists; but I quote here a passage from a French critic of American institutions—Professor André Siegfried in his *America Comes of Age*.⁷⁸ Nowhere else, he says, "can the public be so successfully manipulated by experts. . . . Nowhere else in the world are associations so powerful as in the United States, and especially if they have some social or religious propaganda in view. The good will, the funds, and the devotion at their command are enormous. With their excellent equipment and ceaseless and varied activity, they are the real expression of the community, and they enable it to carry out definite programs of reform. The reverse of the medal, however, is most alarming, for their unrestricted influence upon public opinion is positively dangerous. An Anglo-Saxon community is a veri-

table hot-bed of fanatics who know no scruples in imposing their favorite nostrums. Publicity, which is reduced to an exact science, provides an automatic means of reaching the masses. The temptations are too great, and the weapons too efficient. . . . In this land of exaggerations, where ideals are pushed to extremes, public opinion is a formidable weapon. The methods of organizing it, crystallizing it, and inflaming it to the point of hysteria are so well understood and the technique is so perfect that, given the malleability of the people, there appears to be no limit beyond which they cannot be led."

There is, however, a "limit beyond which they cannot be led." If no one knows precisely what that limit is, this much may, nevertheless, be stated with confidence. Propaganda is likely to succeed only when it runs along with some preëxisting disposition of the popular mind or with sympathetic social and economic tendencies, or at least (if this statement need some qualification) when it does not seriously conflict with such a preëxisting disposition or such sympathetic tendencies. Even then the propaganda must be skilfully conducted, insinuated into the mind by subtle suggestion, so that the convert will look upon the idea as one that has been generated by himself rather than forced upon him by superior intelligence or by cunning. The infantile oaf regards himself as a "responsible, accomplished, and intelligent being."

Furthermore, propaganda should not be confounded with poison-gas. It is deleterious only when its methods

are sinister and corrupt. Mr. Simeon Strunsky says that he "would not give a snap of his fingers for the man who hesitated to employ propaganda in behalf of anything he believed in."⁷⁹ That is the just view. From the standpoint of democracy—the actual and not the imagined kind—propaganda is beneficent and even necessary. The only way most men can get an opinion is to borrow it. If their low-grade intelligence or preoccupation with personal affairs prevents their thinking things out for themselves, they can make a selection between competing ready-made opinions, accepting this one and repudiating that one, if not on the basis of argument, then at least on the basis of authority. They defer to the judgment of a man or a group of men whose character and viewpoint have won their confidence; to the judgment, it may be, of a politician, a labor leader, a captain of industry; or of a group like the American Farm Bureau Federation or the Anti-Saloon League. In one way or another the popular will originates in the Few and is communicated to the Many. It is fortunate that the so-called opinions entertained by the average citizen are his only by the polite fiction of adoption and could sometimes, were their lineage known, exhibit a most respectable family tree. This deference to authority has saved democracy from shipwreck.

The higher critics rest their case. Is not this average citizen an absurdity? He has been told that "it behooves a red-blooded member of democracy always to have an

opinion, even if it is a baseless one.”⁸⁰ He knows that a pose of civic omniscience is expected of him. He forms an offhand impression from what he reads and hears. As he observes the attitude of his newspaper and his party leaders, this impression tends to solidify; and, when he has committed himself to a definite view, he seizes upon arguments wherever he can find them to buttress his position and give it the appearance of rational solidity. He borrows an opinion, because, without it, he would lose prestige with his family, his barber, and his fellow-Rotarian. The less he knows about Boulder Dam, the more insistent and oracular he is in telling the world all about it. At the very mention of the subject he clears his throat portentously, makes an impressive gesture, strikes a special attitude which he has observed in politicians, and conjures up a tone of voice which is universally conceded to be appropriate to political discussion. He is acting a part. He is trying to be the fundamentalist paragon. But, say the higher critics, he is aware all the time that he is far from being a paragon and that he is acting a difficult part. In his heart he is a little ashamed of the deception; in his body he feels a little tired of the pose. If only the fundamentalists would let him alone, let him be himself for a while, he would experience unutterable relief.

REVISED ARTICLES OF FAITH

The higher critics have spoken. They have struck hard at every cherished doctrine of the fundamentalists. They have employed the most varied weapons—argument, satire, ridicule; and the most varied tactics, now covering the legislature with a barrage of sarcasms, now delivering a frontal attack upon the mentality of the masses, or, again, lying in ambush with some poisonous theory of class-differentiation or of the progressive servilization of the masses. It seems an unequal combat. The brains have enlisted on the side that, momentarily at least, gives most scope to individual genius, most encouragement to originality, and the largest rewards in the way of prize-money, citations for distinguished service, or marshal's batons. Where can we discover, within the fundamentalist lines, any staff officer to match Mr. Anthony M. Ludovici in *A Defence of Aristocracy* or Mr. Wyndham Lewis in *The Art of Being Ruled*? Is there anywhere discernible the feeblest glow of the divine fire? Disheartened democrats—always on the defensive, driven to-day from positions which yesterday were officially described as impregnable, their numbers steadily depleted by a civilian propaganda of defeatism—get no message of inspiration

from G. H. Q. in the orders of the day. G. H. Q. is not inspired. Its ideas are derived from manuals of war that antedate the shrapnel of Mr. H. L. Mencken and the high explosive of Mr. H. G. Wells. If the fundamentalists still keep their flag flying, is it because, like the English troops at Albuera, they are too stupid to know that some Marshal Soult has beaten them and so refuse to run away? Is the satire of Mr. Wyndham Lewis just a little too clever to penetrate their stupidity and so prevail against it?

There is an old saying, however, that stupidity is no worse than intelligence and cannot be told from it. The intelligent man may be stupid enough to overrate his intelligence; the stupid man intelligent enough, by virtue of his very stupidity, not to be taken in. Dumb and dull-witted as the fundamentalists seem, they may be, in certain aspects, no worse than some of the higher critics. They are deadly in earnest; and seriousness, if it provokes derision when carried further than the object warrants or paraded too openly and solemnly, may also extort respect. Is Mr. Mencken deadly in earnest? In his *Notes on Democracy* he gives the impression of being out for a good time, of measuring the significance of the Fourth of July in terms of firecrackers, of caring more about the effect of a flippant phrase or a corrosive sarcasm than about the fate of democracy. Menckenism has the appearance of a literary pose. These urchins of the *American Mercury*—playing hooky from Mr. Wyndham Lewis's

Infant Class, it would seem—indulge in all sorts of pranks and utterly thoughtless antics. Behind the back of the fundamentalist, as he passes by, they mock his majestic stride and portentous gravity of mien. They get huge enjoyment out of it and at the same time delight a crowd of onlookers as thoughtless as themselves.

What prompts them to thumb their noses at the fundamentalist? No doubt, he cuts an absurd figure: such colossal vanity and overwhelming self-assurance! But may it not be that his faith is ridiculed not only because it is ridiculous, but also because it is faith? May it not be that these truants, posing as the *intelligentsia*, are conscious of something lacking in themselves and feel uncomfortable when they encounter it in others? The pontifical tone of the Menckenites may disguise an inferiority complex. Great is belief (says Carlyle), were it never so meager; it shall lead captive the doubting heart. In this skeptical age, the fundamentalist still believes. Confronted by that belief—a strange and disconcerting phenomenon—the skeptics are vaguely troubled; and many of them, instead of pausing to examine it and find out whether some germ of truth may not lie hidden behind the grotesque forms of fundamentalist worship, try to crush it at once with ridicule.

In appraising the literature of higher criticism, we must distinguish the spurious from the genuine. We must peer behind the imposing façade and see just what the premises contain. How often we will be reminded of Bismarck's

unsparing characterization of the third Napoleon: at a distance, something; close at hand, nothing at all! Clever phrases are not enough. Without the backing of some strong conviction, they soon begin to pall and to weary us with their insincerity and emptiness. The Menckenites resemble the Irish shopkeeper who had started with nothing and was just managing to hold his own. With tongue in cheek they just manage to hold their pose, which was all they had to start with. They make cheap jokes, the fundamentalist complains, at the expense of the eternal verities of democracy; they treat the most sacred things with levity. Worse still, their diabolical wit produces a laugh—the polite, superior, disdainful, irritating laugh that the clientèle of the *American Mercury* know so well how to cultivate. The wit and the laugh are fashionable to-day. But the fundamentalist has heard somewhere that fashions change. Only a few months ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury, confessing to a dislike of shingled hair, found solace in the idea that morals and manners, like business and the weather, move in cycles, responding to some law of periodicity. He quoted from a seventeenth century chronicler: "Our English gentlewomen are now grown so past shame and grace and modesty as to clip their hair like men." The fundamentalist, comforted by the Archbishop's philosophy, fervently hopes that this period of Menckenism will be very short. His mystical faith persuades him that the whole mass of criticism, genuine as well as spurious, is mere fad and fashion and

will go out with bobbed hair. The truth that has been revealed to him will remain; his creed will stand firm against the rising and falling tide of fashion; for truth, being eternal, can never be conquered.

Our approach, however, should be in a very different spirit: detached, impartial, objective. We want to find out whether the higher critics are right or wrong: not whether they are right from the ethical standpoint or from the idealistic standpoint, but whether, in their analysis of the facts, they have shown that democracy, as the fundamentalists conceive it, is incompatible with existing social conditions. Our problem may be stated in this way: Political institutions, notwithstanding the lag of inertia, respond eventually to social pressure and accommodate themselves to changes in the environment. They cannot be judged by any absolute criteria; there is no best form that is applicable to every people and to every age. At a given time the best form of government is the one that adjusts itself most easily and most completely to the social realities. We may assume, therefore, that democracy spread over the Western world, not because of any inherent superiority, but because of its correspondence with those realities, and that it will be discarded whenever its failure to adjust itself to new conditions becomes apparent. With the speculative activity of the higher critics we need not be concerned. I repeat what I have said before, that by themselves ideas have little effect upon human behavior. John Morley put ideas in

their proper relationship with events when he said, with respect to the French Revolution, that they "acquired a certain importance after other things had finally broken up the crumbling system. They supplied the formula for the accomplished fact." ⁸¹ If democracy is functioning well, no amount of hostile philosophy can wreck it. If it is functioning badly, the philosophers "assume a certain importance" in so far as they give expression to popular discontent—making it articulate and self-conscious—and increase its momentum by analyzing causes and suggesting remedies. The validity of higher criticism depends upon the success of the critics in their analysis and interpretation of the facts.

Of course, the higher critics have not organized themselves into a closed corporation and protected their wares by patents and trade-marks. Anybody can set up as a higher critic by fashioning a shillalah and whacking the heads of the poor fundamentalists. A lunatic fringe attaches itself to every reform movement. But, leaving eccentricities out of account, we still meet with a good deal of exaggeration and overstatement. In combating the excesses of fundamentalism, the higher critics fall into excesses of their own. If the average citizen likes the "movies" better than the primaries and is more interested in Harold Lloyd than in Herbert Hoover, he must therefore be utterly indifferent to politics. If he is far from being an intellectual prodigy, he is therefore a cretin or an infant, "the most trifling brand of the human species

that the world has ever seen." Thus a good case is weakened by being pressed too far. In a similar fashion, propaganda is sometimes represented as an irresistible force. The public mind is malleable, we are told, and will respond to the manipulation of any organized group that has money enough to hire technical experts and buy publicity. Consent is manufactured. The Anti-Saloon League manufactured it at Westerville, Ohio. Yes; but what happened to the consent that was being manufactured by the brewers and distillers who opposed the Eighteenth Amendment? If propaganda succeeds, it also fails; and in estimating its effectiveness we must balance failure against success.

There would be no point in multiplying instances of exaggeration. When the utmost has been conceded, the essential argument remains unshaken. Fundamentalism has been put to rout. Its dogmatic assertions have been explored and exploded. In the language of Herbert Spencer, a Beautiful Theory has been murdered by a gang of Brutal Facts. When you ask the average citizen for his opinion on the McNary-Haugen bill or Secretary Kellogg's pact for the outlawry of war, you get a ready answer, an emphatic, decisive answer; but, observing the difficult nature of the problem and the mediocre intellect of the citizen, and being struck by the startling disparity between the two, you know that the answer cannot be a reasoned opinion. You know that it is a borrowed, ready-made opinion, picked up somewhere and taken home

without any close inspection because it seems to fit the prejudices of the individual and of the group to which he belongs. This average citizen speaks with the authoritative voice of an expert. He delivers judgment with all the conclusiveness of a magistrate on the bench. Don't be too much impressed. He has acquired the manner; that is all. As a judge he cannot understand the technical and intricate evidence, and so decides without understanding it. As an expert he cannot decipher the formula, let alone subject it to laboratory tests. He is handicapped by congenital limitations of mind which his environment serves to accentuate. The typical environment to-day is the city. There, says Mr. Lippmann,⁸² the citizen is assaulted by incessant sound. "Can anything be heard in the hubbub that does not shriek, or be seen in the general glare that does not flash like an electric sign? . . . Under modern industrialism thought goes on in a bath of noise. If its discriminations are often flat and foolish, here at least is some small part of the reason. . . . In that helter-skelter which we flatter by the name of civilization, the citizen performs the perilous business of government under the worst possible conditions." Equally just are Mr. Ireland's observations. The city-dweller, he says,⁸³ "is hardly ever brought into contact with the origin of things. To him a house is something produced by a real-estate dealer, food something taken from a counter or emptied out of a can, heat something which he hopes to get by opening the valve of a radiator, light something that appears in a

glass bulb in one part of the room when he presses a button in another part of it. Of the processes by which these things, and all others which supply his needs, are produced he is entirely ignorant."

The further we investigate the qualifications of the average citizen, the less satisfied do we become. His qualifications must be set against the job that he is supposed to fill; and, however respectable they may be in themselves, they are dwarfed into insignificance when brought face to face with the problems of a highly complex civilization. They do not suggest "Atlantean shoulders fit to bear the weight of mightiest monarchies." The citizen that the fundamentalists picture, capable of guiding the destinies of mankind, is a figment of the imagination. The actual citizen, though deluded with the idea that he is shaping his own course, is really helpless in the play of baffling winds and tides. "What the public does," says Mr. Lippmann,⁸⁴ "is not to express its opinions but to align itself for or against a proposal. If that theory is accepted, we must abandon the notion that democratic government can be the direct expression of the will of the people. We must abandon the notion that the people govern. Instead we must adopt the theory that, by their occasional mobilizations as a majority, people support or oppose the individuals who actually govern them. We must say that this popular will does not direct continuously but that it intervenes occasionally. . . . When public opinion attempts to govern directly it is either a failure

or a tyranny. It is not able to master the problem intellectually, nor deal with it except by wholesale impact. . . . I set no great store on what can be done by public opinion and the action of the masses."

We face the facts, as the higher critics set them before us. We acknowledge the defects, the deceptions and failures, of democratic practice. We abandon the "blind optimism which discounts every disagreeable fact, as having no more than casual and transitory significance, and accepts every agreeable fact as the expression of an irresistible force for good." ⁸⁵ The fundamentalist dream is shattered. Are we not a little like the child who once, with believing ears, heard the reindeer-bells on Christmas Eve and who now has lost all faith in the existence of Santa Claus? He no longer hangs up his stocking. He no longer slips out of bed at three o'clock to see what Santa has put into it. . . . But he still gets presents. Christmas Day is still a reality. We too have lost faith in a childlike myth. We no longer believe in the spontaneous welling-up of truth from the public mind or in the magical properties of the ballot. We no longer think of government as being continuously directed by an alert and informed public opinion. But there is still something substantial and worth while that we can hold fast to. "The great purpose of democracy," Bernard Shaw once said, "is to prevent your being governed better than you want to be governed." If we cannot exert a steady, positive pressure upon the governing oligarchy, we can

at least, by occasional interventions, make use of an effective veto. If, being incapable of the necessary sustained exertion, we cannot rule ourselves, we can, by dispossessing one set of politicians and installing another, decide who our rulers shall be. The oligarchy holds its place subject to the popular will; and this immediate dependence on the favor of the masses is a characteristic of democracy that makes the consent of the governed more of a dynamic force than it can be under any alternative political form. The oligarchy does not rule by divine right.

Let me present the situation as Mr. Norman Angell sees it. "The hope of democracy," he says,⁸⁶ "lies in fully realizing the truth that the voice of the people is usually the voice of Satan." To assume that the people are naturally right is as absurd as to say that there are no reefs in the ocean that the navigator need bother about. If the navigator ignores the reefs, they become a deadly danger. Mr. Angell charts a good many political reefs. He believes that the capacity of the ordinary man is "necessarily very feeble" and that "collective decisions are subject to vitiation by all sorts of emotional irrelevancies and the public apt to be misled in the interpretation of the plainest facts." He remains, nevertheless, a convinced democrat, because he sees no tolerable alternative to democracy; and he proposes to save it by limiting the popular functions—by breaking away from the impos-

tures of fundamentalism and making the democratic process correspond with the facts.

"The first step," he says,⁸⁷ "is to simplify the voter's job. We must not put upon him a task of judgment which he cannot reasonably perform. . . . We should limit his task of political judgment to passing upon general results. He must be able to decide if he is getting what he wants in the way of government and, if not, to know who is responsible. If he is capable of knowing what he wants; of knowing what he cannot decide and what he can; of judging between experts in terms of results and experience as he would have to do in the case of deciding upon a surgical operation for himself; and if he has institutions for helping himself in his job of judgment, it will then be best to give him as simple and effective control as possible over his public servants. But all depends upon his capacity to judge general results. If he cannot do that, if he is incapable even of knowing what he wants, of seeing the most evident operation of cause and effect as it goes on before his eyes in his daily life—then he will always be the helpless puppet of forces outside himself, his blind instincts being indeed part of those forces; and we can do nothing for him."

Mr. Lippmann, in *The Phantom Public*, takes a very similar line. He is bent upon finding a way by which men can act successfully "on highly complex affairs by very simple means" and by which a successful junction

can be effected "between the intricacies of the environment and the simplicities of the human faculty." ⁸⁸ According to his theory, public opinion should be "a reserve force brought into action during a crisis in public affairs. . . . The public intervenes only when there is a crisis of maladjustment and then not to deal with the substance of the problem but to neutralize the arbitrary force which prevents adjustment. It is a theory which economizes the attention of men as members of the public, and asks them to do as little as possible in matters where they can do nothing very well." ⁸⁹

We get rid of our fantasies, then. We acknowledge that, since there is and must always be a governing oligarchy, our problem is simply to devise means of controlling it. What check can the people impose? They can pass only upon general results, according to Mr. Angell; they can intervene only when there is a crisis of maladjustment, according to Mr. Lippmann. Very well; but what do these formulas mean? We should be glad to have more precise and explicit language. No doubt, the first steps that should be taken in the United States are obvious enough: we must do away with the initiative and referendum; we must make a very drastic cut in the number of elected officials and at the same time increase the terms of the few that remain; we must distinguish sharply between politics and administration (policy-determining and policy-enforcing functions) and give the permanent experts a much wider field of activity

than we have dreamed of giving them in the past. We must, in a word, cut loose from all the precepts of Jacksonian democracy and of contemporary fundamentalism. But, having done so much and brought ourselves abreast of the practice that already prevails in France and England and other countries, what still remains to be done? We shall have to know in concrete terms just what Mr. Angell means by "the general results," which the electorate is to pass upon, and just what Mr. Lippmann means by "the crises of maladjustment," in which alone the electorate is to intervene. These things look uncommonly like general elections.

There will be very few offices to fill at a general election; that will help. Presumably too, under the new dispensation, candidates will talk about nothing but principles and the broad considerations of policy. Presumably the voters, modestly alive to their own limitations and knowing the sort of things they can and can't decide, will refuse to be interested in details. If a candidate has the hardihood to ask their opinion about free silver, they will reply (according to W. H. Mallock):⁹⁰ "The question of the respective merits of mono-metallism and bi-metallism is a remarkably difficult and, we may add, a remarkably dry one. We know nothing about it ourselves; and the most eminent experts disagree. You, however, though you muddle us when you talk about it, presumably know more than we do, or else you are not worth your salt. So do not worry us about *our* judgments.

Make the best use you can of your own." Is this language taken out of a fairy-tale? Can we imagine the voters really abasing themselves like that? I once spent a terrible hour with a politically minded lady, a delegate to the San Francisco Democratic convention of 1920. It is impossible to imagine her confessing that there is any question whatever upon which the people cannot pronounce a final and perfect judgment. She will never abdicate; she will have to be constrained; and I wonder how Mr. Angell and Mr. Lippmann propose to curtail her activity without stopping it altogether. Perhaps, on the one hand, rules can be formulated and mechanical devices employed that will help to save democracy from itself. On the other hand, education might do something to convince the people of their inadequacy and impart a little discipline and self-restraint. Education *might* do something. At present it seems to inculcate a sense of overwhelming competence.

Mr. Angell, pessimistic about so much else, has a singular faith in education. "From the conquest of inanimate nature," he says,⁹¹ "we must go forward to the conquest of human nature. Otherwise human nature will destroy human society." He believes that education can guide and direct irrational instincts and impart "a will to intelligence." According to Mr. P. W. Wilson, the miracle is already being performed. Democracy is being educated. "When the full bearings of public life are realized," he says,⁹² "by the generation that is arising throughout

North America, there will be no need to comment any further on the tired voter." Has Mr. Wilson actually made the acquaintance of this new generation? Has he seen nothing of its disillusionment and incredulity? Mr. Angell at least admits that, under present conditions, the voter is tired before ever he reaches voting age. His hope of a "will to intelligence" lies in the future. But Mr. Ireland denies him even that future hope. "Government does not derive its efficiency from a mere knowledge of the facts," he insists,⁹³ "but from their intelligent interpretation; and the reason why education cannot have a cumulative effect upon government is that *intelligence cannot be taught* and that *knowledge cannot be inherited*." Mr. Lippmann is quite as emphatic. "The usual appeal to education can bring only disappointment," he says.⁹⁴ "For the problems of the modern world appear and change faster than any set of teachers can grasp them, much faster than they can convey their substance to a population of children. If the schools attempt to teach children how to solve the problems of the day, they are bound always to be in arrears. The most they can conceivably attempt is the teaching of a pattern of thought and feeling which will enable the citizen to approach a new problem in some useful fashion. But that pattern cannot be invented by a pedagogue. . . . The moralist, I am afraid, will agree all too readily with the idea that social education must deal primarily not with the elements and solutions of particular problems but with the

principles that constitute an attitude towards all problems. I warn him off. It will require more than a good conscience to govern modern society, for conscience is no guide where the essence of the difficulty is to find a guide for the conscience."

If Mr. Lippmann dismisses this educational panacea in scathing terms, he has provided himself with an alternative remedy. He would make use of the experts, put organized intelligence at the disposal of the crowd. Instead of leaving the voters to flounder around in helpless confusion, he would have the facts of any given problem laid before them by an independent and unbiassed fact-finding authority. He provides in this way a means of escape from "the intolerable and unworkable fiction that each of us must acquire a competent opinion on all public affairs."⁹⁵ The politicians state their case for or against monometallism, like counsel addressing a jury; the judge intervenes with his own dispassionate review of the evidence and a statement of the law. The fact-finding body—here likened to the judge—would define the consequences of alternative lines of action. This idea of bringing science to the aid of government looks practicable as well as attractive. It has occurred to others beside Mr. Lippmann. Mr. Spender, who considers its adoption "very urgent," offers strong arguments in its favor.⁹⁶ The main argument against it is that the impartiality of the fact-finding commission would be very difficult to secure and preserve. In this country at the

present time there could be utterly no hope of preserving it.

We are coming to recognize the limitations of democracy and the danger of proceeding as if they did not exist. The processes that we are familiar with, being based on the false postulates of fundamentalism, must be modified and made less discordant with the facts. How can democracy survive when its grandiose pretensions are so disproportionate to its possible achievements? By adhering to a system that involves outrageous deceptions and inevitable failures, we invite catastrophe. The only way of salvation lies in admitting the realities frankly and restricting the electorate to functions that come within the scope of its very limited competence. As we set about the task, however, the question is likely to arise: Is democracy worth saving?

In *Democracy at the Crossways*, Professor Hearnshaw has given an answer to that question. "I should, indeed, despair," he says,⁹⁷ "of making an effective defence of democracy merely by attempting to repel the assaults of its enemies, or of its still more formidable candid friends. Much that they say seems to me to admit of no denial or refutation. The effective defence of democracy appears to me to rest on quite other grounds, and I prefer to maintain the cause of popular sovereignty by contending, (1) that, if democracy has grave defects, so also have all other forms of state . . . ; (2) that the specific defects of democracy are those of youth, that (in Pro-

fessor MacCunn's words) democracy is 'raw to its work,' and hence that its worst failings are due to immaturity and are likely to be overcome by experience; and (3) that, even in its present imperfect state of development, democracy has a supreme ethical and educational value which places it far above all other forms of state." While he is ready to criticize and reject many of the fundamentalist doctrines, Professor Hearnshaw's democratic piety leads him into some extravagances. Observe the grounds of his faith in the perfectibility of democracy. "No deviation from this line of argument is possible," he says,⁹⁸ "to those who cling to that faith in the fundamental reasonableness and essential honesty of man which is, as we have seen, the ultimate postulate of the democratic creed. To doubt that democracy will be cured of its vices, and will be cured of them by the triumph of its own better qualities, is to despair of human nature itself, and to yield to a pessimism that must finally involve the abandonment of hope for the whole human race in whatever form of state and under whatever form of government it may be disciplined." It must be so, he contends, not because any facts support the contention, but because the alternative is despair. I cannot accept that kind of argument. But otherwise I think that Professor Hearnshaw has taken the right line in his justification of democracy. In answering the question as to whether democracy is worth saving, it will be well to consider in turn what democracy has accomplished, what claim it has to

a superior ethical value, and what merits it possesses in contrast with other forms of government.

Bryce, after surveying the achievements and failures of democracy delivers a cautious, measured verdict that must be infinitely discouraging to the fundamentalist.⁹⁹ He comes to the conclusion that it has given, on the whole, "better practical results. . . . The experiment has not failed," he says,¹⁰⁰ "for the world is after all a better place than it was under other kinds of government, and the faith that it may be made better still survives." The democratic period has been marked, indeed, by a notable improvement in the condition of the lower classes. Illustration seems almost superfluous. Consider, from the standpoint of the wage-earner, the change that has taken place in the hours and conditions of work. He has an eight-hour day in the factory; and he is protected by a State code which lays down minute regulations regarding such matters as air, light, sanitary arrangements, and safety devices. Consider, too, the employer's liability laws and insurance against sickness and unemployment. Still more striking, perhaps, has been the progress in the prevention and cure of diseases to which the poor are peculiarly liable; among the contributing factors have been better housing, better clothing, and better food. Has not the world become, in certain ways at least, a better place to live in? Nevertheless, assuming that a general advancement has taken place, are we justified in attributing it to democracy? Apparently not. The

spirit of social reform antedates democracy and has had no necessary connection with it. Economic phenomena respond to laws that, in the long run, politics cannot control or even seriously modify. The social progress of the past hundred years would have been achieved—perhaps less completely—under any form of government. Democracy must be regarded as one phase of a general movement, as a symptom of the leaven that has been working in society and pushing it forward with great momentum and along many different channels. At the most, we can say that, if democracy reflects and expresses dominant social tendencies, it may also react upon them and accelerate their pace.

The relation between democracy and social progress is rather one of accident than one of cause and effect. It is easy to make sweeping claims, as the fundamentalists do, but impossible to substantiate them. Democracy must look elsewhere for a convincing justification. Does it not possess an ethical or spiritual value? Can we ignore the psychological effects of a creed that imparts to the average man a sense of his own dignity and of his potential share in controlling and reshaping the world about him? Is there not a message of infinite hope in the ideal of better and better social coöperation—in Clemenceau's vision of a solidarity that holds us all united in the accidents of joy and sorrow and of a tolerance that helps and beautifies life? Seventy years ago, with cogency and eloquence, John Stuart Mill emphasized the moral value

of democracy. He contended that freedom has an invigorating effect upon character and that "the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate."

Mill's essay on representative government is the most widely read and the most frequently quoted of all his writings. Perhaps it is too familiar to bear quotation now. I turn, instead, to Mr. J. A. Spender's memoirs, his *Life, Journalism, and Politics*, which appeared in 1927. While Mill's observations were largely theoretical, Mr. Spender's take color from a long journalistic career that gave him an intimate view of English political life. Democracy, he says,¹⁰¹ is "the system which gives a civilized and reasonably well-educated people the best opportunity of securing fair and just government and expressing its own character through its government. . . . To me liberty and self-expression are things which have a value in themselves, and the loss of which would be a real deprivation. It may be that Italians and Spaniards and Russians are rightly regarded by their masters to be incapable of governing themselves intelligently, but I cannot imagine myself being a citizen of Italy, Spain, or Russia without feeling that I had suffered a serious loss of self-respect in making the submission required by their rulers. This seems to me the normal human way of feeling about government, and I think it ought to be expressed in forms of government. Democracy, moreover, has the great merit of upholding the theory that human beings

as such have a value which is not to be measured by the inequalities of rank and wealth. . . . To have a constant reminder in the theory of the state that the humblest and meekest of its citizens may have a worth which places him above the highest and wealthiest of his fellows is a great thing and a noble thing and a Christian thing. Morally, I can think of no greater set-back than that humanity should be declared or proved incapable of it."

Self-respect, Mr. Spender says: democracy gives it and autocracy takes it away. In a word, we coöperate standing, not on our knees. Mr. Bertrand Russell has expressed much the same point of view:¹⁰² "If you are going to have people with self-respect, who are not viewed with contempt, you must endow them with their share of power; for power is the one thing which in the long run brings the respect of others in the mass; and any class which is destitute of power will be despised, and accused of every kind of crime, and harried and ill-treated and subjected to cruelty." Of course, the higher critics may raise their eyebrows over such assertions and make a gesture of incredulity. When Mr. Russell speaks of power and self-respect, they may argue, is he not picturing democracy according to the fundamentalist formula? What actual power does the voter exercise? The opinion that he airs and the ballot that he casts can accomplish nothing against the multitude or against the dominant political oligarchy. Where does his self-respect find lodgment

when he realizes not only his impotence in politics, but still more—notwithstanding the theory that politics controls business—his subordination to the despots of industry and commerce? Is not the optimism of the average man, if he really does entertain it, based upon a mere delusion? We must confess that in some measure it is.

Nevertheless, delusion sometimes exerts a wholesome positive force. How often credulity, in the domains of religion and politics alike, has carried mankind forward along the path of social achievement! Even the skeptic might admit that it is better, perhaps, to believe in a delusion and, through the force of belief, advance a little than to believe in nothing at all and resign oneself to stagnation. Supposing man is

“Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar.”

Supposing he does make tragic blunders because of the false hope that he entertains. At least the principles of democracy, even the attenuated principles of a Walter Lippmann or a Norman Angell, carry with them profound psychological effects. As an active, voluntary sharer in community enterprise, the average citizen may look with some pride upon the little contribution that he is able to make and see in it a sort of universal significance. In fixing the blame for derelictions and failures, he cannot divest himself of responsibility for his own conduct. He is responsible; and a consciousness of his obligations

to the community will lift him above the passive type of character that an authoritative régime tends to impose and will impart a sense of personal dignity.

Only a closed mind, a mind that slams the door in the face of the spirit, can be altogether oblivious to the elevating influence of democratic doctrine. But, aside from this element of superiority—one that is hard to measure and evaluate—what merits does democracy possess in contrast with alternative political systems? In thinking of an alternative, we must not fasten upon the practice of democracy, emphasizing all its defects, and then contrast it with an ideal autocracy or an ideal aristocracy. Such self-deception is frequent enough. Mankind, in its eternal restlessness, in its eternal discontent with actual surroundings, is disposed to entertain visions of a refuge that does not exist, to imagine that something different will be something better, and to envelop the past in a romantic haze which obscures all its uglier aspects. Monarchy, for example, has sometimes been viewed through such a haze. But if we go back to the age of popular revolt and make contact with the realities, we see how hateful the rule of Stuart or Bourbon kings then seemed. It was arbitrary, corrupt, and inefficient rule. Hereditary succession leaves too much to chance. Bryce observes that since the close of the fifteenth century, when the principle of succession had become well settled, the number of capable sovereigns has been very small and that we form our opinion by looking back at the exceptions. "Nothing

is rarer," says Emile Faguet,¹⁰³ "than a firm and intelligent king." Faguet, though merciless in his arraignment of democracy, proposes no substitute. All he asks is some modification of its machinery.¹⁰⁴ The experiments in Russia and Italy, if he had lived to witness them, would have confirmed his preference for popular government.

One advantage of autocracy, according to current notions, is the escape from a faulty and unreliable popular will. But does the autocrat escape? Mr. Norman Angell has taken a very different view.¹⁰⁵ He has shown that the autocrat "must conciliate, or bamboozle, or bow to a strong public feeling, a passion or a folly; and further that the conditions of dictatorship render the development of public wisdom more difficult, and the development of public folly more probable, than under those forms of government we describe as 'democratic.'"

For this critic of democracy, as for Faguet, the possible alternatives have no fascination. He accepts democracy, with all its inevitable limitations, as the best hope for the future. Only we must abandon our false conceits and recognize those limitations frankly, adjusting our political mechanism to meet the requirements of the actual situation. We must stop treating impossible ideals as if they were realities. "Let no one complain," Georges Clemenceau has said, "if I do not open to civilized man the perspectives of perfection. There is no more paradise on earth than in the clouds."

APPENDIX · I ·

NOTES

Chapter I.

¹ *Conservative Democracy* (1919), pp. 1 and 13.

² *Democracy and Leadership* (1924), pp. 242 and 245.

³ *The Nemesis of Mediocrity* (1919), p. 2. "The word 'democracy' is used in its current sense as representing both the implicit aim and the explicit result of individual and community life during the last two generations in Great Britain, France, and the United States. It covers not only practical agencies and methods but all those other forms of activity, such as organized religion, education and social life, where democratic principles have been increasingly adopted. . . . One of the chief faults with what we call democracy is our stolid failure to understand that there is not necessarily any connection between the two, and that generally speaking the democratic method (unstable, constantly changing its form) is incapable of accomplishing the democratic ideal."

⁴ *The Powers and Aims of Western Democracy* (1919), p. 21.

⁵ *Civilisation and Progress* (3d ed., 1892), p. 7.

⁶ *Whither Democracy?* (1927).

⁷ *Democracy under Revision* (1927), p. 14. "This implies a repudiation of caste, of inherent rank and function, of all privileges and all fixed subordinations. It is equalitarian or rebellious. And it is mildly paradoxical in the fact that, by insisting upon the importance of all individualities, it tends to restrain the exaltation of particular individuals, and by exalting all individuals to an equal level, it subordinates all individuals to the mass. . . . If you reflect, I think you will agree that its appearance was everywhere associated with the breakdown of outworn and outpaced systems, with

processes of release and liberation, and generally also with processes of disintegration. Democracy to many minds will also involve the challenging and repudiation of authority." This lecture reappears as Chapter V (pp. 51-77) of *The Way the World Is Going* (1929).

⁸ *New York Times Magazine*, March 20, 1927. In this same article Mr. Wells defines democracy again as "government and the control of affairs in general by persons elected on a broad or universal suffrage." This article reappears as Chapter IV (pp. 37-50) of *The Way the World Is Going* (1929).

⁹ Aristotle (*Politics* iii, 8) contrasts the true with the perverted forms of government: kingship with tyranny, aristocracy with oligarchy, polity with democracy. But, if democracy meant to him "the rule of the many for the good of the few," it was still the rule of the many. See also Sir George C. Lewis, *Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Some Political Terms* (1832, 1898), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ *Popular Government* (ed. 1886), p. 59.

¹¹ *Democracy at the Crossways* (1918), p. 124.

¹² Alleyne Ireland, *Democracy and the Human Equation* (1921), p. 125.

¹³ *Politics* iv. 2.

¹⁴ *A Final Burning of the Boat* (1928).

¹⁵ R. M. MacIver, *The Modern State* (1926), pp. 338-340.

¹⁶ Charles H. Cooley, *Social Organization* (1909, rev. ed. 1920), pp. 120 *et seq.*

¹⁷ *Democracy and the Human Equation* (1921), p. 142.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁰ *Whither Democracy?* (1927), pp. 274, viii, and 331.

Chapter II.

²¹ *Modern Democracies* (1921), II, 603.

²² See the abstract in *Political Democracy: Will It Prevail?*—this being a syllabus of the six Kingsway lectures; and the report of Mr. Shaw's lecture in *Fabian News*, XXXIX, 2 (January, 1928).

- ²³ *Democracy under Revision*, pp. 21 and 36.
- ²⁴ *New York Times Magazine*, March 20, 1927.
- ²⁵ *Democracy under Revision*, pp. 28 and 29.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 39 *et seq.*
- ²⁷ *New York Times*, March 20, 1927.
- ²⁸ *Democracy under Revision*, p. 41.
- ²⁹ *New York Times*, March 27, 1928.
- ³⁰ March 12, 1928.
- ³¹ *Congressional Record*, March 19, 1926, p. 5703.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, *The Party System* (1911), p. 185.
- ³⁴ Hilaire Belloc, *The House of Commons and Monarchy* (1920).
- ³⁵ XLIX, 55 (December 8, 1926).
- ³⁶ *New York Times Magazine*, March 20, 1927.
- ³⁷ *The Cult of Incompetence* (1911), p. 34.
- ³⁸ *Democracy at the Crossways* (1918), p. 343.
- ³⁹ L. T. Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction* (1905), p. 184.
- ⁴⁰ *The Cult of Incompetence*, pp. 30-31.
- ⁴¹ (1913), p. 17.
- ⁴² *The Nemesis of Mediocrity*, pp. 21-22.
- ⁴³ *Democracy and Leadership* (1924), p. 243.
- ⁴⁴ Robert Michels, *Political Parties* (1915), p. 377.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 400 and 401.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 377.
- ⁴⁷ *Modern Democracies*, II. 548.
- ⁴⁸ *The Limits of Pure Democracy* (2d ed., 1918), pp. 373 *et seq.*
- ⁴⁹ *Public Opinion* (1922), p. 228. "Nowhere is the idyllic theory of democracy realized. Certainly not in trade unions, nor in socialist parties, nor in communist governments. There is an inner circle surrounded by concentric circles which fade out gradually into disinterested or uninterested rank and file."
- ⁵⁰ *The Responsible State* (1918), pp. 19-20.
- ⁵¹ J. A. Hobson, *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (1926), p. 189.
- ⁵² *Direct Action* (1920), pp. 51-52.

- ⁵³ "A Defense of Democracy," *Current History*, XXVII, 84 (April, 1928).
- ⁵⁴ *The Public Mind* (1927), p. 139.
- ⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.
- ⁵⁶ *Self-Government in Industry* (rev. ed., 1919), and other volumes. On the subject of Guild Socialism, see also: G. R. S. Taylor, *The Guild State* (1919); S. G. Hobson, *National Guilds and the State* (1920); and Reckitt and Bechhofer, *The Meaning of National Guilds* (ed. 1920).
- ⁵⁷ See Bertrand Russell, *Proposed Roads to Freedom* (1919).
- ⁵⁸ *Politics* (1922), p. 224.

Chapter III.

- ⁵⁹ *The American Commonwealth* (ed. 1910), II, 259.
- ⁶⁰ *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), p. 62.
- ⁶¹ *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (1913), p. 23.
- ⁶² *The Phantom Public* (1925), p. 13.
- ⁶³ "Is Democracy a Failure?" *Harpers Magazine*, October, 1926, p. 558.
- ⁶⁴ *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), pp. 90-91.
- ⁶⁵ Norman Angell, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 *et seq.*
- ⁶⁶ Simeon Strunsky in *New York Times Book Review*, October 25, 1925.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *The Phantom Public*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁹ *The Public Life* (1925), Vol. II, p. 106.
- ⁷⁰ *The Press and the Organisation of Society* (1922), p. 16.
- ⁷¹ *Liberty and the News* (1920), p. 5.
- ⁷² *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (1926), p. 487.
- ⁷³ *Democracy and Leadership*, p. 243.
- ⁷⁴ *The Public Life*, II, 41, 100, 108, and 110.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. III.
- ⁷⁶ *The Public Mind*, p. 123.
- ⁷⁷ *The Press and the Organisation of Society*, pp. 23 and 43.
- ⁷⁸ (1927), pp. 244-246.

⁷⁹ *New York Times Book Review*, October 24, 1926. See his further observations, *ibid.*, February 12, 1928.

⁸⁰ Simeon Strunsky, *ibid.*, October 25, 1925.

Chapter IV.

⁸¹ *Critical Miscellanies*, III (1886), 286. Morley quotes a French writer of 1795: "It was after the Revolution had fairly begun that they sought in Mably and Rousseau for arms to sustain the system."

⁸² *Public Opinion* (1922), p. 72.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁸⁴ *The Phantom Public*, p. 61.

⁸⁵ Ireland, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸⁶ *The Public Mind*, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

⁸⁸ *The Phantom Public*, p. 79.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69 and 199.

⁹⁰ *The Limits of Pure Democracy* (2d ed., 1918), pp. 15-16.

⁹¹ *The Public Mind*, p. 232.

⁹² *New York Times*, April 1, 1928.

⁹³ *Democracy and the Human Equation*, p. 127. The italics are mine.

⁹⁴ *The Phantom Public* (1925), p. 27.

⁹⁵ *Public Opinion*, p. 31.

⁹⁶ *Life, Journalism, and Politics*, 2 vols. (1927), II, 191-193.

⁹⁷ *Democracy at the Crossways*, p. 69.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁹⁹ *Modern Democracies*, II, 562.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 609.

¹⁰¹ II, 190.

¹⁰² In the course of a debate with Mr. Will Durant: *New York Times*, October 23, 1927.

¹⁰³ *The Dread of Responsibility* (1914), p. 195.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁵ *The Public Mind*, p. 173.

APPENDIX • II •

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